

Ancient Sexuality

Part Three

Prepared by Robert G. Bedrosian

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Church, Byzantium, Early Medieval

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The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church

CHARLES A. FRAZEE

In the present discussion within the Roman Catholic Church over the requirement of clerical celibacy, the arguments generally center on the ascetical value of the practice. Pope Paul VI speaks of celibacy as a "precious jewel" leading to a life of selflessness for the man who seeks to follow Jesus Christ in the priesthood. When priests themselves talk about the subject, it is often in terms of its symbolic value as a total commitment to the service of the Lord. It is further seen as a practical measure, following Saint Paul's view that the married state frees the ordained minister from the cares of personal family life so that he may devote himself entirely to the concerns of the whole Christian community.¹

While the personal ascetic significance of the unmarried life may be the principal reason for the retention of the present discipline, an investigation into the origins of mandatory clerical celibacy shows that this factor was only one of many contributing to the establishment of the practice. The legislation pertaining to celibacy dates from two widely separated periods of church history when the pressures on church authorities were quite diverse. In the fourth century the evidence shows that the demand for celibacy grew out of the prevailing concept of sexuality and how this affected the sacrificial minister. A rebirth of interest in the subject took place in the eleventh century when a growth of monastic influence, both in church personnel and policies, argued for European secular society to subject itself to ecclesiastical models.

Since the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church seeks to base itself upon the teaching of Jesus as reflected in the apostolic tradition, the argument for clerical celibacy has often been sought in the New Testament. Biblical studies, however, have now reached these conclusions. In so far as Jesus recommended detachment from the things of this world "for the sake of the Kingdom," the unmarried life is a valid one. One may even go so far as to leave one's wife for the Kingdom. There was, however, absolutely no connection made by Jesus between the ministry and celibacy. The call to perfection is addressed to all believers. What Jesus did was to modify the prevailing Jewish attitude towards marriage, taken from the commands of the first two chapters of Genesis, which required every male to be married. He stated that the search for God's Kingdom can be so impelling that one may rightly forego the married life.

St. Paul was more rigorous in his teaching—his expectancy of Jesus' return made him recommend that the unmarried should not seek a wife, for the Lord was near at hand. Some members of the community had the charism of celibacy and this, he noted, was a good thing. His statements on Christian marriage provided the basis for the theology of the sacrament, but in his attitude towards women he frequently displayed a bias which reflects the spirit of the age more

1. "The unmarried man cares for the Lord's business; his aim is to please the Lord. But the married man cares for worldly things; his aim is to please his wife, and he has a divided mind." I Corinthians 7:32-3.

Mr. Frazee is assistant professor of history in California State College, Fullerton.

than the message of Jesus. The first Epistle to Timothy urges the bishop to be "the husband of one wife" and assumes that he will be able to give an example in the care for his own family which can be transferred to the community of Christians which he serves. In the Apocalypse, however, the author shows a prejudice towards marriage which is seen in the Lamb being worshipped by those who have not been "defiled" by women.²

The rigorous tone of the author of the Apocalypse gives evidence of the growing number of Christians who might be classed as enthusiasts. Having been converted to Christ, they sought to follow him completely and were, no doubt, upset with those who were not as fervent as themselves.³ In the area of sexual morality the enthusiasts were especially insistent. Within several communities in Syria they forced their ideas upon their fellows so forcefully that marriage came to be looked upon as contrary to the Christian ideal, and celibacy was made a condition for baptism. This rigorism was usually identified with those Christians under Gnostic influence, but was not limited to them. Irenaeus singles out a group called Encratites who condemned not only marriage but also eating meat and drinking wine.⁴ The apostolic fathers consistently opposed the ideas of these rigorists since they violated not only the teaching on marriage found in the New Testament but the general practice of the church, which judged the married state as the normal way of life for all Christians, clergy as well as laity.⁵

Despite the rejection of any outright condemnation of marriage the intellectual climate of the first Christian centuries persuaded some Christian authors to express misgivings about sex and marriage. The source of this feeling was the notion that Christians were really pilgrims and strangers to this world; the expectation of Jesus' return did not admit becoming too comfortable here. Moreover, there was common agreement between Christian and pagan that the physical world, composed of matter, was the least worthy of all created being. It was subject to demonic forces and was itself a major source of the evils which befell man. This meant that the body and things corporeal could not be a cause of fulfillment and pleasure; only the spiritual influence which affected the soul really mattered.⁶

The concern for moral perfection among Christians was especially strong in Africa, so it is not surprising that the first Christian thinker to champion clerical

2. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the scriptural texts concerning celibacy. This has been done by R. J. Bunnik, "The Question of Married Priests," *Cross Currents*, XV, 4 (Fall, 1965), 407-414; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Celibacy, Ministry, Church* (New York, 1968), and Quentin Quesnell, "Make Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 19:12)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXX (July, 1968), 335-358. The only major English work on the history of celibacy to date is unfortunately very biased. See Henry C. Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church* (London, 1907).
3. On this subject see Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (New York, 1950), and Hans von Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church*, trans. by A. V. Littledale (London, 1968), p. 233.
4. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.28 in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus: series graeca* (Paris, 1857-66), VII, Pt. 1, 690. Hereafter PG. Rigorist ideas later passed into Montanism and Manichaeism.
5. Clement of Rome, *Epistle to the Corinthians* 38.2, in PG, I, 283; Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to Polycarp* 5.2, in PG, V, 273. See also Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. by James Moffat (London, 1908), pp. 212-13, and Edward Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy* (New York, 1968), pp. 21 ff.
6. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 7-14; Maurice Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, trans. by H. C. Snape (New York, 1964), p. 539; Frederick C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (New York, 1962), pp. 51-75.

celibacy over matrimony is Tertullian (c. 150-225). He exclaims:

How many men and women there are whose chastity has obtained for them the honor of ecclesiastical orders! How many who have been wedded to God! How many there are who have restored to their flesh the dignity it had lost! They have already separated themselves as children of the world to come by killing concupiscence and, with it, all else that has no place in Paradise.⁷ Since this is the first mention of those in the clerical state opting for the celibate life in great numbers, it brings up the question: why this innovation?

The answer to this query lies in what has been called the sacralization of the clerical life. Up until the end of the second century the picture received of the Christian church is that of a federation of loosely-connected communities almost exclusively found in the larger cities of the Roman Empire. At the head of each local group is the *episcopus* or the *presbyteros*, bishop or elder (sometimes elders), deputed by the community to be its president through an election by the local clergy and people. He had been consecrated by a neighboring bishop and is in communication with other churches by correspondence. Presumably he continued to earn a living, to care for his family as before his election, and along with the other city clergy was not distinguished by his style of life from his fellow Christians. In time, as his duties multiplied, he could become full-time in his religious office, and as responsibilities mounted other clerics might join him in the administration of the church.⁸

Then, at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century his role began to change. The growth of the number of people within the church and the attendant complexity of problems—partly brought on as the result of persecution by the state—forced the bishop more and more to take on an “official” status within the community. While formerly his liturgical role was subordinate to his teaching office, it was now accentuated as primary.⁹ There was pressure on the bishops to become “priests” in the way that the Jews and the pagans had cultic ministers. There was concern for definite places of worship—the Jews had their synagogues and the pagans their temples—and a desire that the clergy, as many as were needed, should be full-time in the service of the church. The priesthood was well on the way to becoming a special kind of Christian caste, something it had not been before this time.

By analogy there were now greater demands made upon the Latin priest to lead a different kind of life as befits the minister of God’s service. The demand of Christ for holiness was seen as especially pointed in the direction of the clergy. A norm was established which called for serious clerics to lead celibate lives in some form of community—the married bishop, priest, or deacon who kept his own household was considered to be less holy, his dedication less firm, than his unmarried confrere.

In the East, however, the older tradition of a married clergy persisted in Ephesus and Alexandria. From Syria, the Didascalia, written in the first half

7. *Exhortation to Chastity* 13, conclusion, in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus: scriptores latini* (Paris, 1844-64), II, 978. Hereafter *PL*.

8. This development is traced in Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. by J. A. Baker (Stanford, 1969), pp. 76-123.

9. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter to the priests, deacons and people abiding in Furni* 1. 1: “. . . everyone honored by the divine priesthood and consecrated for the clerical ministry ought only to serve the altar and the sacrifices and to have time for prayers and petitions.” *Cyprian: Letters*, trans. by Sr. Rose Donna. Vol. 51 of *The Fathers of The Church*, ed. by Joseph Deferrari (Washington, 1964), 3.

of the third century, notes the requirements of the episcopal office there:

But it is required that the bishop be thus: a man that hath taken one wife, that hath governed his house well. And thus let him be proved when he receives the imposition of hands to sit in the office of the bishopric, whether he be chaste, and whether his wife also be a believer and chaste, and whether he has brought up his children in the fear of God and admonished and taught them, and whether his household fear and reverence him, and all of them obey him.¹⁰

Whether this sacralizing of the ministry in the West was consonant with the teachings of Jesus can be debated. Jesus himself, while respecting the sacredness of the Temple and its worship, never seems to have had much in common with the Jewish priesthood, among whom were found some of his most bitter enemies. He never referred to himself as a priest, his one cultic act was at the Last Supper—yet many Christians who read the Scriptures were impressed by the parallels between the high priestly role and Jesus' ministry. They had an excellent antecedent in the Epistle to the Hebrews. These same Christians now argued that the obligations of the Jewish priesthood should be laid upon the Christian. Where else could a better model be found for sacerdotal holiness than in the Sacred Scripture?

For the followers of Jesus to seek guidance in the Old Testament was certainly nothing novel. While Christians rejected much that was a part of Judaism, it is still a fact that the foundations of Christian morality, the governing of the community, and the cult of the church were based upon Jewish precedent. According to Harnack the Old Testament was extremely important:

It was used as a means of verifying all principles and institutions of the Christian church—the spiritual worship of God without images, the abolition of all ceremonial legal precepts, baptism, etc. . . . The Old Testament was used for purposes of exhortation according to the formula *a minori ad majus*; if God then punished and rewarded this or that in such a way, how much more may we expect, who now stand in the last days and have received the *Klisis Tis Epaggelias*.¹¹

Within the Old Testament there was usually a matter of fact acceptance of nature and material things, but there was a significant exception regarding certain categories of objects or activities that were looked upon as unclean. These were four in number: certain foods, leprosy, contact with corpses and sexual activities of any kind. Regarding the latter, uncleanness resulted from any discharge from sexual organs, menstruation, childbirth, and even normal sexual intercourse. Such activity rendered a person unclean for the rest of the day, and then a bath was required. Priests who had intercourse were not only unclean for the whole day but were not permitted to eat any of the food offered for sacrifice.¹² The principal effect of any uncleanness was to prohibit the person from performing any act of worship; it was not a question of morality since licit and illicit sexual activities were lumped together. The ban fell upon the

10. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, IV, ed. by R. Hugh Connolly (Oxford, 1929), p. 32. On Ephesus, see Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 5.24.6-7 in *PG*, XX, 493 and on Egypt, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.12.90 in *PG*, VIII, 1188.

11. Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. by Neil Buchanan (New York, 1958), I, 176.

12. Ex. 19.15; Lev. 7.19-20; 15.16; 22.4 ff; I Sam. 21.4; Ezk. 44.9. The Jewish priesthood went through its "sacralizing" period after its return from the Babylonian captivity; see Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York, 1958), pp. 314ff. The best presentation on this subject is the chapter "La sacralisation du service pastoral et les origines de la loi du célibat ecclésiastique," in Jean-Paul Audet, *Mariage et Célibat dans le service pastoral de l'Eglise* (Paris, 1967), pp. 117-137; see also L.

unclean person simply because of his physical state.¹³

It was quite natural to demand the state of sexual cleanliness before a sacrifice by the Christian priest once the concept of holiness became attached to the Eucharist. Appeals to Old Testament precedents reached their culmination when "... by contagion and imputation the eucharistic president himself became looked upon as at least analogous to the high priest of the Old Covenant and the spokesman of the entire royal priesthood which is the church."¹⁴

The association between sexual intercourse and uncleanness is so ancient that its origins can no longer be traced in history. Emile Durkheim sees it as a result of human psychology's concern for the sacred. The one who approaches a holy act has to prepare himself by submitting to a negative cult:

The man who has submitted himself to its prescribed interdictions is not the same afterwards as he was before. Before, he was an ordinary being who, for this reason, had to keep at a distance from the religious forces. Afterwards, he is on a more equal footing with them; he has approached the sacred by the very act of leaving the profane; he has purified and sanctified himself by the very act of detaching himself from the base and trivial matters that debased his nature. So the negative rites confer efficient powers just as well as the positive ones; the first, like the second, can serve to elevate the religious tone of the individual.¹⁵

The universality of the demands for sexual abstinence before participation in worship is striking in the Mediterranean countries. It was found among the Semitic peoples,¹⁶ in the Hellenistic religions and in the old Roman cult. Entrance to a temple area in the Hellenistic era required ritual purity of a high order and although specific requirements regarding diet might vary, there was almost always an insistence on the avoidance of sexual intercourse. Visitors to Poseidon at Sunium were warned: "You are to be pure from garlic and pig's flesh and women . . .," while devotees of Athena at Pergamum were ordered: "You must abstain from intercourse with your own husband or wife for one day, from any other for two days." A common soldier's prayer to Mithras invoked the god: "Mithras, also a soldier, keep us pure till dawn."¹⁷ Roman farmers before sacrificing were required to be *castus* before making their offering. This gave them the undefinable power of *numen*. Before making his worship, "the participant in such a rite would need all the *numen* that was to be had, and sexual relations are full of *numen*; therefore to engage in them would use up the available supply of that precious power."¹⁸

The motivation behind these prescriptions apparently was based upon the feeling that the "power" sought from the gods would be lost unless sexual purity

Hödl, "Die lex continentiae—Eine Problem geschichtliche Studie über dem Zölibat," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, LXXIII (1961), 325-344.

13. James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible*; rev. ed. by F. C. Grant and H. H. Rowley (New York, 1963), p. 166; John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee, 1956), p. 141; E. O. James, *The Nature and Function of Priesthood* (New York, 1955), pp. 177-78.
14. George H. Williams, "The Ministry of the Ante-Nicene Church" in *The Ministry in Historical Perspective*, R. Niebuhr and D. Williams, eds. (New York, 1956), p. 28.
15. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. by J. W. Swain (London, 1915), p. 309. See also Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. by R. Sheed (New York, 1958), pp. 14-15.
16. W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (New York, 1889), pp. 435-436; Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (New York, 1959), pp. 152-64. Muslims must abstain from sex on the pilgrimage to Mecca.
17. A collection of these temple inscriptions can be found in Arthur D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background* (New York, 1964), pp. 17-20.
18. H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (London, 1948), p. 36. *Numen* compares to the Polynesian *mana*.

was present in the worshipper. Rose suggests that chastity is so powerful because it ". . . involves turning the great magical force of human fertility, unspent and unweakened by normal usage, into a magical channel."¹⁹ While Christians would not have agreed on any magical power connected with sexual activity, the all pervading attitudes of the religions about them were bound to make an impression on the manner in which they regarded themselves and their ministers. The Christian enthusiasts had support through appeal to the worship in Judaism and the Hellenistic cults for their demands that their own ministers prepare for the Eucharist through sexual abstinence.²⁰

It was not until the fourth century that church authority took recognition of the rigorists' concern for the sexual life of church ministers. At a council held at Elvira, a town near Granada, the Spanish bishops in attendance voted to forbid members of the clergy who were married from having sexual relations with their wives. Canon 33 reads as follows:

We declare that all bishops, priests, deacons and all clerics active in the ministry are to entirely keep themselves from their wives and not have children. Whoever shall do so will be dismissed from the clergy.²¹

The canon does not forbid marriage to the clergy, this is still expected, but is aimed at sexual relations between the priest and his wife. The Spanish bishops have assimilated the notion that sex is evil for the minister of the church—in some mysterious way it defiles the celebrant of the Eucharist.²²

Elvira was a local council, and its decrees extended only to a very small part of the Iberian church, but it set the tone for further action to preserve the sacredness of the ministry as it was then understood. The next step was to seek general legislation which would apply to the whole Christian ministry. Thus, at the first ecumenical council of the church at Nicaea in 325, presumably at the suggestion of the Spanish bishop Hosius of Cordova, the president of the assembly, the idea of imposing continence upon all was initiated. But the measure was defeated as a result of a plea from the bishop Paphnutius of Thebais in Egypt. Although he himself was unmarried, he did not believe that the church should impose such a demand upon its ministers. The council was willing, however, to legislate that no priest should marry after ordination and forbade any cleric from having a woman in his household who was not a close relative.²³ This could be a response to the remarkable ascetic custom practiced by some enthusiasts who lived with a woman in "spiritual marriage." While staying in the same house, sometimes sharing the same bed, the couple demonstrated their holiness by remaining continent.²⁴

In the decades following Nicaea a wave of popular enthusiasm for the type

19. H. J. Rose, "The Bride of Hades," *Classical Philology*, XX (Jan.-Oct., 1925), 241. See also A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1940) I, 394-95.

20. George J. Williams comments on the forms of Christian ministry: "We know that these three kinds of ministry of the New Testament epoch were modeled in part on Jewish and pagan precedent and we shall take note of the extent to which they were elaborated in self conscious polemical parallelism alongside these rival institutions on the assumption that Christians were the militia of Christ under the heavenly emperor and the true or new or ongoing Israel of God." (Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 37).

21. Joannes D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, New ed. (Paris, 1901-06), II, 2, 406; K. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1907-21), I, 1, 212-64.

22. Audet, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-33; Blenkinsopp, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

23. *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. Centro di Documentazione Istituto per le Scienze Religiose (Basel, 1962), p. 5; Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.11, in *PG* LXVII, 101-104; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.23, in *PG*, LXVII, 925.

24. Derrick S. Bailey, *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* (London, 1959), p. 33. The women were called *subintroductae*.

of Christian life known as monasticism swept the Orient. While previously an ascetic life had to be undertaken on the personal initiative of the Christian, it was now possible to join with others in pursuing the ideal which was held to rest in a life of extreme self-denial. Celibacy was of supreme importance to the monk—his kind of life was unthinkable apart from it. Beginning in Egypt, monasticism moved into Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor with astonishing rapidity and enlisted men and women in the tens of thousands. It was carried to the West when Athanasius was exiled to Gaul and took with him several Egyptian monks. His authorship of the *Life of St. Antony*, the first monk, caught the imagination of the Latin Christian world to a degree that the life of the Egyptian ascetics became a model for Christians who took their religion seriously.²⁵ The vast majority of monks were laymen, and the ideals they demonstrated to a Christian population which was given to admiring the life of extreme self-denial, made the clergy look poor by comparison. As a result, many priests adopted the celibate life of the monk. Just twenty years after Nicaea, a council at Gangra found it necessary to warn: "If anyone holds that it is not lawful to partake of the Eucharist when a married priest offers it, let him be condemned."²⁶

St. Basil of Caesarea (330-379) is responsible for giving a definite direction to monasticism in the East, as did St. Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547) in the West. Both men were concerned over the celibate life of the monk. Basil's appreciation is summed up in his statement that it is celibacy which "makes man like the incorruptible God" and "preserves the body from corruption."²⁷ While Benedict gave no special attention to chastity in his Rule, the story of Gregory the Great concerning Benedict's great temptation shows the man's spirit. When one day he imagined the joy of being with a woman, he threw himself into a thorn bush to rid himself of his desires. Gregory notes approvingly: "Thus the wound of his soul was healed by the wounds of his body, since he conquered pleasure with pain, and while his exterior was burning from the sting of thorns his internal fire was put out."²⁸

The fourth and fifth centuries were the great ages of the fathers of the church, and in their writings there is remarkable unanimity regarding sexual affairs in a pessimistic way. By taking such a position they were simply reflecting the attitudes towards sexuality which had once been the prerogative of the enthusiasts of the early church. The theme is the same: sexual intercourse for members of the clergy defiles them and makes them unworthy of the ministry. The clergy belong to a higher order, more is expected of them. Their life of celibacy sets them apart as being true Christians since marriage is really only a concession to man's weakness and results from sin.

A few witnesses should suffice to make the point. Ambrose of Milan (339-397), one of the most influential churchmen of his day, was appalled at the notion of a married priest. He spoke of such as "foul of heart and body." Because a cleric had received the grace of sacred orders, he advises: ". . . you must remain strangers to conjugal intimacy, for you know that you have a ministry,

25. Jean Decarreux, *Monks and Civilization*, trans. by C. Haldane (London, 1964), 70-117. See also Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (Ann Arbor, 1957); David Knowles, *From Pachomius to Ignatius* (Oxford, 1966), p. 5.

26. Hefele-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 2, 1029-49.

27. Basil of Caesarea, *On Virginity* 2. app., in *PG*, XXX, 671.

28. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 2.2, in *PL*, LXVI, 132.

whole and immaculate, which must never be profaned by any sexual relations."²⁹ He ordered that each church in his jurisdiction should have two priests so that the daily liturgy might always be offered when one was absent, but also to provide mutual support for the chaste life. Women were never to be allowed in the home of the clergy. Eusebius of Caesarea commented: "It is fitting that those who have been consecrated and who have taken on the task of serving God abstain from relations with their wives."³⁰ That most notorious celibate of all, Jerome, stated flatly: ". . . in the presence of the purity of Christ's body, all sexual union is impure."³¹ Cyril of Jerusalem commenting on Jesus' virginal birth, contended: "He who wishes to serve fittingly the Son must abstain from women. . . ."³² Augustine's doctrine, scattered throughout his many works, is in similar tones.

Derrick Bailey summarizes: "In the patristic treatment of sexual and matrimonial topics one feature particularly compels attention—namely, a curious and sometimes almost morbid preoccupation with physical sexuality and especially with coitus, towards which most of the Fathers displayed what can only be described as an attitude of settled emotional antipathy. This preoccupation, which in the case of one or two was nothing less than obsessive, caused them to handle most sexual questions principally if not exclusively in venereal terms."³³

It was when the popes of Rome took up the cause of celibacy in the latter half of the fourth century that general progress was made in legislation on that subject. It was the period in which the Roman bishops were intent upon strengthening their power within the church. Letters from Rome were the usual method of encouraging celibacy to become the practice, beginning with Pope Damasus (366-84), and extending through the pontificate of Leo I the Great (440-61), approximately a hundred years later. It is interesting that the motivation given for celibacy is always the same: sexual intercourse and the Christian ministry are incompatible.

Damasus in his letter urging celibacy to the bishops of Gaul began with the ambiguous argument that a married priest is unable to give counsel to widows and virgins. St. Paul requires the celibate life, Damasus believed, from a reading of his letters to the Corinthians and the Romans. That marital acts are defiling to the minister is evident from both Jewish and pagan practice—the priest who is defiled by intercourse cannot expect to ". . . undertake his duties with heavenly assistance."³⁴ Pope Siricus (384-399) in his letter to Himerius of Tarragona in Spain went so far as to call sexual intercourse by a priest a criminal act. Clergymen who act in this way are followers of sexual passion. He continued: "All priests and deacons are bound by the irrevocable law that from the day of ordination we submit our hearts and bodies to sobriety and continency in so far as we try to be entirely pleasing to God in the sacrifices we offer every day. But those who are in the flesh, says the Vessel of Election, cannot please God."³⁵ It is worth noting that the liturgical role of the priest is specifically brought out as demanding sexual abstinence.

29. Ambrose, *Concerning the offices of the ministers* 1.50, in *PL*, XVI, 97-8.

30. Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 1.9, in *PG*, XXII, 81.

31. Jerome, *Against Jovinianum* 1.20, in *PL*, XXIII, 249.

32. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechism* 13.25, in *PG*, XXIII, 758.

33. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

34. Damasus, *Letter to the Bishops of Gaul*, in *PL*, XIII, 1181-96, here attributed to Siricus.

35. Siricus, *Letter to Himerius of Tarragona*, in *PL*, LVI, 558-59. The same sentiments are to be found in this pope's *Letter to the African Bishops*, *PL*, LVI, 728.

The letters of Popes Innocent I (401-17) and Leo the Great confirmed the views of their predecessors. Innocent ordered that anyone wanting to be a cleric must promise he will never marry, especially if he has been guilty of fornication. Leo extended the prohibition of marriage to subdeacons of the Roman church, but in a letter to Rusticus of Narbonne he was willing to allow a cleric in Gaul to continue living with his wife as long as there were no sexual relations between them.³⁶ This returns to the legislation of Elvira. Local councils in the West supported the Roman rulings: at Carthage in 390 and 401, at Turin in 398, Orange in 441 and Tours in 461. These councils were apt to include all sorts of other prescriptions for married people which were in line with the ideas prevailing on sexuality and the status of women. The latter were sometimes forbidden to approach the altar or touch any sacred vessels, and they were to receive the Eucharist only if they had both their head and hands covered.

The civil law, at length, began to take cognizance of the church legislation on the life of the clergy. The Theodosian code of 438 incorporated the Nicene canon forbidding women, except wives, to live in the same house with clerics unless they were close relatives. This was repeated in Justinian's legislation which further forbade a married man with children to become a bishop and ordered that any childless married priest, elected to the bishopric, must no longer have sexual relations with his wife.³⁷

As far as the eastern church was concerned, the Synod in Trullo of 692 said the final word on the question of the clergy and marriage. Bishops were required to live continent lives; if married when elected, the wife of the episcopal candidate had to retire to a convent. All other clergy could be married before ordination but were not permitted to marry afterwards. In case of the death of a priest's wife, he was to remain celibate.³⁸

In the West local councils of the fifth and sixth centuries continued to legislate on the subject of the marital status of the clergy. The usual canons for admittance to that state required married men to practice continence and unmarried candidates to pledge they would never contract matrimony. The number of married bishops continued to decline; nevertheless, two bishops of Rome were married before their ordinations: Agapitus I (535-36) and Adrian II (867-72). Even a special blessing was included within the liturgy for the wives of married men on the day of their husband's ordination in the sixth century. These women were called presbyteresses (presbyterissae) and were entitled to wear special dress.³⁹

The monastic movement obtained its greatest success in the later sixth century when monks, who were also ordained clergy, came to be chosen bishops of Rome, Constantinople and Antioch. In the West, the first monk to hold the papacy was Pelagius II (579-90), followed by the famous Gregory the Great (590-604). This meant that the ideals of the monastic life would be even more emphasized for the clergy as a whole. Gregory reaffirmed the legislation on mandatory celibacy in the Roman church even for subdeacons.⁴⁰

36. Leo, *Letter to Rusticus of Narbonne*, in *PL*, LIV, 1204.

37. Theodosius, *Code*, XVI, 2.44 in *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, T. Mommsen and P. Krueger, eds., (Berlin, 1954) I.851; Justinian, *Code*, I, 3.47; *Novellae* VI, 1 and CXXIII, 1 in *Corpus Juris Civilis*, P. Krueger, ed. (Berlin, 1959), II, 34; III, 37, 594.

38. Petro Bilaniuk, "Celibacy and the Eastern Tradition" in *Celibacy*, G. H. Frein, ed. (New York, 1968), pp. 44 ff.

39. P. Delhaye, "Celibacy," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, 374; Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church* (New York, 1949), II, 199-201.

40. Gregory, *Letter to Peter, Subdeacon of Sicily*, in *PL*, LXXVII, 506.

Local councils continued to support and elaborate on papal policy in this regard. At the fourth council of Toledo in 628 a declaration was required from any candidate for orders that he had never been guilty of grievous sexual sins. Over the next four centuries there was constant lawmaking in councils and local assemblies concerning the sexual life of the priest, giving evidence of the inability of church authorities to make effective the ban on marriage for clerics in major orders. Efforts were pushed to have the secular clergy in the towns live with the bishop or share a common residence, but again the frequency of the laws shows the weakness of the practice.

Although there is all too little evidence, most authorities agree that the great majority of clergymen in the West from Gregory the Great to the tenth century were married men.⁴¹ Despite the actual state of affairs, which church authorities preferred to ignore, legislation constantly reaffirmed the old principles that, married or unmarried, the sacred minister could not with a clear conscience enjoy a normal wedded life and offer the Eucharist.⁴² These were the centuries when the Germanic peoples were settling in their permanent homes throughout Europe. Here the process of assimilating Roman culture, mainly through the Benedictine monastic schools, occurred. In a number of important ways, however, Germanic custom remained vital. One of these, which had a bearing on the question of celibacy, involved the concept of property ownership.

Roman law, once it concerned itself about the matter, had placed all ecclesiastical property in the name of the bishop. He was the sole administrator and had final disposition over the distribution of the wealth and goods of the Christian community he served. Since the clergy, up until the fifth century, almost exclusively kept their residence in cities, the direct control of the bishop was an easy matter. But then the German invasions occurred, city life declined, and a new situation arose wherein the church's mission changed to a rural environment in which German tradition was paramount and church property was widely diffused.⁴³

Out of this situation appeared the proprietary church. In this system the church belonged to the person upon whose land it was built. This meant that the administration of the church and the property which accompanied it could be bought or sold, given as part of a dowry or exchanged for other pieces of land. In theory the church's title was in the name of the saint to whom it was dedicated—the owner was merely the administrator of the saint's goods. The only thing the law forbade was that the church edifice must not be used for secular affairs—it must always be kept a sacred building. In time, churches, formerly entrusted to the bishop alone, came to be "owned" by kings, nobles, monasteries, or by church officials in their own name.⁴⁴

The clergy who served in the churches were appointed by the owner or patron of the building, after receiving the approbation of the local bishop, and served at his pleasure. While those churches in the possession of the bishop received their clerics directly from his appointment, those who were attached to

41. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 42; Bunnik, *op. cit.*, p. 418; Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

42. David Knowles and Dimitri Obolensky, *The Middle Ages*. Vol. 2 of *The Christian Centuries* (London, 1969), pp. 51 ff.

43. Ulrich Stutz, "The Proprietary Church as an Element of Medieval Germanic Ecclesiastical Law," in Geoffrey Barraclough, ed., *Medieval Germany, 911-1250* (Oxford, 1948), pp. 35-70.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 45. At the beginning of the ninth century, for example, in the diocese of Chur the bishop had 81 churches, the king and nobility owned 200.

churches owned by a layman were to a large extent under his direction. The clergy of private churches, and these soon became the majority, recognized the bishop, after ordination, as their spiritual leader, but much more concern was given to the authority held by the person from whom they received their charge. There were efforts to keep the priest free from the control of the lay owner, but these were defeated by the vested interests which resulted from the arrangement.

Frequently the parish priest might be simply one of the peasants or tenants of an estate. He was not distinguished from his fellow villagers except for his function within the community. He supported his wife from farming the piece of land attached to the church and from the offerings made by parishioners of bread and wine, an annual gift at Easter and, after 750, from the tithe. Little more than Mass on Sundays and feast days and services at baptism and funerals was expected of him. On Holy Thursday he might journey to the cathedral for the Holy Oils and attend a synod with his fellow clergy, but then again he might not. St. Boniface complains that in Gaul of the eighth century local meetings of the clergy and bishop were unknown.

Priests and bishops in Italy who held title to smaller churches which they administered were often forced to turn over the ownership of their property to the local nobility in the ninth century. The times were hard and costs were too high; in some instances, however, it was much to the advantage of the priest, who, ". . . after leasing his lands and tithes to a layman, lived in idleness off the income from the church, while the church itself was served by a hired priest or cleric on a meager stipend from the lay patron."⁴⁵

Because of the revenue attached to larger churches their possession could be quite lucrative for the owner. He usually could count on receiving a considerable amount of wealth from a yearly tax on the church, from the produce of lands held by it and from gifts. He also could expect a share of the tithe. This was a tax of one-tenth on all agricultural production, a practice which was first begun in Gaul in the sixth century and became a matter of public law during the rule of Charlemagne.⁴⁶ Church legislation tried to divide the income of the tithe into four equal shares; one each to the bishop, to the clergy, to the poor, and to the maintenance of the church building; but this proved impossible to enforce.

The inauguration of the feudal system accentuated the tendencies concerning church property which commenced at the appearance of the German peoples within Europe. The new element on the scene was the custom of investiture, a ceremony in which the lay lord bestowed the symbols of authority upon the bishops of his territory, making them his vassals. In return for grants of land the bishop, like the noble, was to provide a certain number of men for the armed forces of the lord. The profits accruing to the bishops were impressive. At a council held in Aachen during 816 it was possible to divide the episcopate into ranks according to the wealth of each—the richest held between 140,000 to 75,000 acres, while even the poorest owned 5,000 to 7,500 acres.⁴⁷

This discussion on ecclesiastical property introduces the two problems which worried conscientious Christians of the day: the upper clergy were too involved in the service of the state, and the lower clergy were too powerless in the feudal

45. Catherine Boyd, *Titles and Parishes in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, 1952), p. 92.

46. Emile Amann and August Dumas, *L'Eglise au pouvoir des laïques*. Vol. 7 of *Histoire de l'Eglise*, ed., by A. Fliche and V. Martin (Paris, 1948), 270 ff.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 268; James W. Thompson, *Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1928), II, 650 ff.

system. Church property which was set aside for the use of the entire Christian community was in danger of falling completely into private hands if a married clergy became accepted.

The fear of alienating church property was not new. Already in the sixth century, Pope Pelagius I (556-61) had decreed that a married man becoming a bishop had to agree his children could not inherit the property of the church, but four hundred years later this interdiction was increasingly difficult to enforce.⁴⁸ There is evidence that in northern Italy, Normandy, Brittany, Wales, and even Iceland, married bishops were passing on church property to their children. Rectors of churches might be members of the same families for generations—even bishoprics became hereditary. A list of the canons of St. Paul's in London shows that in the eleventh century one-fourth were married, and sons were inheriting the position of their fathers.⁴⁹

The loss of church property to the heirs of married clerics resulted in alerting the church to this problem in the late tenth century. Places where the practice of clerical celibacy was still partially honored now witnessed a revival of interest in legislating against the married clergy in their midst. Such was the case in England where, during the rules of Ethelred and Cnut, those clergy who dismissed their wives were promised monetary rewards and social preferment.⁵⁰

In Germany, the Emperor Otto I decreed that the sons of clergymen were barred from certain offices and that they should be ineligible for ordination themselves. This was not always successful; for example, the biographer of Bishop Adalberon of Metz (984-1005) noted approvingly: "The bishops of his times, some out of pride, others because of simplicity of heart, refused to receive the sons of secular priests to sacred orders and did not want to admit them to the church state. But blessed Adalberon, who disliked no person, received them all."⁵¹ Burchard of Worms warned that parishioners must not refuse to attend Mass offered by married priests.⁵²

No one can doubt that some legislation was needed to correct the abuses about which Atton of Vercelli complained to his clergy: "I am embarrassed to say it but I believe it dangerous to ignore that there are several among you who are overwhelmed by passion and allow indecent women to live in your homes, partake of your meals, and be seen in public with you. You let them manage your households, conquered by their charms, and install their children for heirs . . . while the women are well dressed the churches are despoiled and the poor suffer."⁵³

In a very real sense the enthusiasm of the early church was reborn in the reform movements of the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Beginning with the foundation of Cluny in Burgundy (910) and the reformation of Gorze in Lorraine (932), fervor for the ascetic life was rekindled until it eventually carried all the way to Rome itself. Cluny's spirit was surpassed when stricter eremitical orders came into existence with the foundations of Fonte Avellana and Camaldoli by St. Romuald (c. 950-1027), while St. John Gualbert (990-1073) governed a com-

48. Pelagius, *Letter to the Patrician Cethego*, in *PL*, LXIX, p. 414.

49. Amman and Dumas, *op. cit.*, pp. 478-80.

50. R. R. Darlington, "Ecclesiastical Reform in the Late Old English Period," *English Historical Review*, LI (1936), p. 405.

51. Constantine, *Life of Adalberon*, XXV in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, II, 667. Hereafter *MGH*.

52. Burchard of Worms, *Decree III*, in *PL*, CXL, 645-46.

53. Atton of Vercelli, *Epistle Nine*, in *PL*, CXXXIV, 116-17.

munity where perpetual silence was the rule at Vallombrosa. St. Bruno established the Grande Chartreuse in 1084, and Citeaux was organized a few years later.⁵⁴

This demand for the ascetic life stemmed in large measure from the overwhelming sense of guilt which afflicted people during these years. It became the major concern of Christians to seek remission of their sins, and this attitude ". . . was progressively to heighten the significance for Christians at large of the devotions of the monastic order."⁵⁵ The world was once again seen in the pessimistic terms of the early church fathers; the life of self-denial was the one means of sure escape. Thus, monastic ideals, especially the celibate life, came to influence the whole of Christendom once more.

An obvious area to which monastic reformers turned attention was the life of the secular clergy in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Through the years the practice of having a married clergy in the West had become an accepted fact. The priest's wife was one of the figures of village life in western Europe just as she was in eastern Europe; the only difference was that in the West, according to church law, she and her priest-husband were both supposed to abstain from sexual relations. Needless to say, this ideal was infrequently kept.⁵⁶ For the reformer this situation demanded immediate attention, both from the point of the individual cleric and from that of the church as a society. The church had to be free of a married clergy so that it might be free of the social and economic restrictions placed upon it by the feudal system.

The reforming spirit of the monasteries reached the papacy in the early eleventh century. The legislation of Pope Benedict VIII (1012-24) decreed stricter penalties against married priests' children, ordering that these should be considered serfs of the church, who could neither be freed nor allowed to inherit property. At a council held in Pavia, priests who were married were forced to resign, but the bishop of Verona complained that if he were to enforce clerical celibacy he would have no priests.⁵⁷

The council of Bourges in 1031, during the pontificate of John XIX, besides requiring a promise of continence on the part of one who was a candidate for the subdiaconate, went so far as to forbid married priests to continue living with their wives:

It is forbidden for priests, deacons or subdeacons to have wives or concubines. If they refuse to leave them, they may act only as lectors or cantors. Likewise we permit none of the clergy henceforth to be married or keep a concubine.⁵⁸

The rigorism expressed at Bourges reached Rome when a relative of Emperor Henry III, Bruno of Toul, was chosen pope principally because of imperial influence. Taking the name Leo IX, and after demanding that his own election to the papacy be legitimized by vote of the Roman clergy, he commenced an attack on the abuses which he felt were weighing down the church. Leo's main enemy was simony, by which he meant any lay interference in church affairs, despite the fact that his own promotion had come about thus. He commenced a centralization of authority in the papacy by personal visitations throughout western Europe and by the appointment of legates *a latere* who were sent to the various nations with extensive powers to represent him in reforming councils.

54. Knowles, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-20.

55. H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 121 ff.

56. Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. by L. A. Manyon (Chicago, 1964), II, 345.

57. Ratlier of Verona, *Letters*, in PL, CXXXVI, 585-86.

58. Mansi, *op. cit.*, V, 19, 503.

Leo encouraged the custom of archbishops' receiving the pallium from the pope, when they obtained their appointment. Usually this involved a trip to Rome or wherever the papal residence might be located. Leo actually spent only half a year in Rome itself throughout the whole of his pontificate, since he felt his personal presence was needed to direct the national churches in their efforts to be rid of lay control, simony and a married clergy.⁵⁹

His travelling companions included a large staff of curial officials needed to oversee the direction of the assemblies of the clergy summoned by the pontiff. Two of these synods, held in 1049, have a bearing on the history of celibacy: Rheims and Mainz. Leo had come to Rheims for the consecration of the monastery of St. Remigius. This involved the transfer of the saint's relics to the major altar. Before they were encased in the altar, Leo had them exposed in the presence of the assembled bishops and abbots. He asked, with the saint as a witness, that any of the clerics there who had paid money for his office should please rise and confess the matter. An acute embarrassment resulted for many; some excused themselves; others, on the following day, were repentant. Having finished with simony, Leo then urged on the purified assembly the two canons: "That no monk or cleric should apostacize from his order," and "That no one should participate in an incestuous union." These canons have been broadly interpreted as prohibiting clerical marriage.⁶⁰

At the synod held in Mainz with Leo and the Rhineland bishops the same targets came under attack. The historian of the council, Adam of Bremen, recounted the proceedings:

Moreover many things were decreed there for the good of the church and, above all, simoniacal heresy and the evil of clerical marriage were forever condemned by the signatories of the council. It is proved that when our lord archbishop came home he was not silent about these things. As regards these things he decreed the same judgment that his predecessor, the memorable Alebrand, and Libentius before him had introduced, namely that they be "put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22) and of the city, lest the seductive presence of their enticements should offend the chaste of vision.⁶¹

In the Easter synods of Rome more decrees were issued against the marriage of priests. During 1051 the assembly went so far as to call for the enslavement of the wives and mistresses of the clergy. They were to be made *ancillae* of the Lateran palace.

The reform received a great impetus at this time from Peter Damian. Born around 1007, he had been orphaned early in his life and was raised by a priest. He had an ascetic bent and soon became active in the reform of the monasteries of northern Italy. Leo IX liked men of his calibre and brought him to Rome where he made him a cardinal. He was sent to Milan by Pope Stephen in 1059, a post which was extremely difficult since the Lombard clergy had a tradition of independence from Rome. There simony and married clergy were the general rule. Although Peter Damian was none too successful in his efforts to impose his will in Milan, it did give him first-hand information for his subsequent writings.

His fervor led him to violent attacks upon clerical marriage in *The Book*

59. Horace Mann, *The Lives of the Popes in the Middle Ages, 590-1304* (London, 1902-32), VI, 89.

60. Anselm, *History of the Dedication of the Church of St. Remigius*, in *PL*, CXLII, 1417-20; R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1953), pp. 125-27; and Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300* (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), pp. 31, 32.

61. Adam of Bremen, *Deeds of the Bishops of the Church of Hamburg*, in *MGH*, VII, pp. 346-347.

of Gomorrah, and *Concerning the Celibacy of the Clergy for Nicholas II*. His attitude towards the body was no doubt at the root of his views. He urged as an ideal upon a client: "Come now, brother, what is this body which you clothe with such diligent care and nourish gently as if it were a royal offspring? Is it not a mass of putrefaction, is it not worms, dust, and ashes?"⁶² Peter based his ideas on celibacy from an analogy of the priests of the Old Testament with those of the New. If ritual purity was demanded of the Jewish priest before offering sacrifice, the Christian priest was called to do the same. Clerics who were married should be deposed from the ministry as unfit and unworthy celebrants of the Eucharist.⁶³ Peter's obsession with women brought him to caution an inquirer: "Certainly I who am already an old man can safely and legitimately look upon an older woman whose face is lined with wrinkles. . . . But I guard my eyes at the sight of more beautiful and attractive faces, as I would children from fire."⁶⁴

Opposition to Peter was voiced by Ulrich, bishop of Imola, who cautioned that celibacy for the clergy must result from personal conviction, not institutional law, since marriage was not something evil but good. Ulrich's work was entitled *The Rescript or Epistle Concerning the Celibacy of the Clergy* and enjoyed, with other pamphlets, sufficient support that it eventually merited condemnation by Pope Gregory VII. It was Peter Damian, not Ulrich, however, who best represented the spirit of the age when popular piety influenced by monasticism demanded that the clergy live more ascetical lives.

Among other outstanding eleventh-century reformers was Humbert of Silva Candida, who, like Leo IX, had come from Lorraine, where the church's reforms had made the most progress. For a while Humbert had been associated with Cluny, but he found that the spirit there had cooled, so he sought out more rigorous establishments that were more to his taste. At length he went to Rome, there to become an advisor of the reforming popes in their efforts to regain control of the church from the lay nobility and the German emperor.

Humbert believed the church could be independent only if an attack was launched upon the methods by which the lay lords kept power over the church in their hands—the real enemy was simony. He published a work entitled the *Three Books against Simoniacs* in 1059.⁶⁵ In it he charged that simony was actually a heresy. His reasoning was based on a theology of grace which he said could only be received by a person who was completely free to accept it—the money or other influence used by the unworthy aspirant to a church office actually nullified the validity of his ordination or consecration. Humbert's stance on this question led him to claim that ordinations of priests by a bishop guilty of simony were in fact void. In this view Humbert had fallen into the heresy of Donatism which made the validity of the sacraments dependent upon the worthiness of the minister.

Humbert was, of course, most insistent that the clergy lead celibate lives. From his point of view, married priests were also heretics, guilty of a theological aberration called Nicolaitism. This term he coined from confusing the associates of a certain Nicholas in the Apocalypse 2:15 with the deacon Nicholas of Acts

62. Peter Damian, *Various Works*, in *PL*, CLIV. His books are found in *PL*, CLV, 159-90; 379-88.

63. Owen J. Blum, *St. Peter Damian: His Teaching on the Spiritual Life*, in *Studies in Mediaeval History*, New Series: Catholic University of America (Washington, 1947), 87-97, 175-76.

64. Peter Damian, *Letters*, 7.18, in *PL*, CXLIV, 45.

65. Found in the *MGH, Libelli de Lite* (Hanover, 1891-97), pp. 95-253.

6:5. The Nicolaitans were charged with fornication—Humbert felt free to apply this term to the married clergy.⁶⁶

The party of the enthusiasts was considerably advanced when its nominee Gerard, bishop of Florence, but a native of Burgundy, was elected to the papacy in December, 1058. The new pope chose to be called Nicholas II. He brought to Rome as his closest advisors Humbert and Hildebrand, the latter a Tuscan monk who would subsequently become Pope Gregory VII. Hildebrand was named archdeacon of the Roman church, an office which gave him wide supervisory powers over the reform of the church. With these determined churchmen having arrived in the eternal city, a program for a reconstituted world soon commenced. In the year following his election, Nicholas summoned a synod to meet at the Lateran. In attendance were 113 bishops drawn mostly from Italy. This council is best remembered for its decree which established a college of cardinals to be electors of the Roman pontiffs and thus negated the power of the emperor and the Roman nobility.

As a corollary to this move to free the papacy from lay interference, the married clergy came under strong attack. Incorporating a significant part of Humbert's ideas on the ministry, the synod under the name of the pope, ruled in Canon 3:

No one shall attend the Mass of a priest whom he knows for certain to have a concubine or a woman living with him (*subintroducta mulier*). Also this same holy synod establishes this decree under pain of excommunication, that according to the constitution on clerical chastity of our predecessor of blessed memory, saintly Pope Leo, we order and command on the part of the omnipotent God and by the authority of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, that any priest, deacon, or subdeacon, who openly lives with a woman, or, if he already has one, does not give her up, is not to say Mass or read the Gospel or Epistle at Mass or remain in the community of the clergy for the divine office with those who are obedient to the above mentioned constitution.

The canon also took away the benefice of the married priest. The Lateran council was aware that its prescriptions could best be enforced if the secular clergy were to adopt the life-style of monks. In fact, it was this life alone which was considered "apostolic," although, in the eleventh century, most priests kept their own households. With this in mind, Canon 4 ruled that the clergy

. . . shall sleep and eat together near the church to which they have been ordained as is fitting for pious clergy and hold in common whatever revenues come to them from the church, and we urge them especially to strive to attain the apostolic way of life which is the life in common.⁶⁷

Opposition to the rigorous party centered in Milan, where the clergy claimed that the right to marry was a custom which could never be taken away. A synod of the Lombard clergy elected Cadalus, bishop of Parma, as a rival pope, but this movement did not have sufficient strength to challenge Nicholas, for the papacy enjoyed the support of the Normans, the most effective military force then in Italy.

During the papacy of Alexander II (1061-73) no significant legislation on celibacy was forthcoming, but attempts were made to implement past decrees that bishops and priests who married should be suspended.⁶⁸ However, when Al-

66. On Humbert, see Augustin Fliche, *La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête chrétienne, 1075-1125*. Vol. 8 of *Histoire de l'Eglise*, ed. by A. Fliche and V. Martin (Paris, 1944), pp. 16 ff.

67. Mansi, *op. cit.*, V, 19, 907.

68. Alexander II, *Historical Works*, in *PL CXLVI*, 1383.

exander died in April, 1073, the reform movement gained momentum, since his successor was Hildebrand, chosen pope by acclamation—despite the decree of the Latern Council—the man who, as Gregory VII has given his name to this whole era of church history. It was quite clear to the new pope that the church should be the guiding institution of Europe and that he, as bishop of Rome, must superintend its course. If this meant effecting a social and political revolution, then let it be. Gregory's proclamation was that the church must be free—independent of imperial interference, noble factions, the simoniacal system and married clergy.⁶⁹

Nowhere did Gregory admit that his moves were dictated to obtain more power for himself and the episcopacy. Armed with patristic texts, appeals to past councils, ancient papal directives and the Donation of Constantine, the pope felt confident that these were sufficient to support his case. He would have been quick to deny he was an innovator. There is no doubt that the pope's own personality contributed to the task he set before himself, for Gregory was a radical and thus upset those less inclined to see the truth as he did. The eminent churchmen who were his contemporaries, Ivo of Chartres, Lanfranc of Canterbury, and Abbot Hugh of Cluny, all seem to have been disturbed at the Gregorian policy. R. W. Southern assesses him: ". . . for the timid he was too dangerous; too violent for moderate men; too autocratic for men of independence. Visionaries found him too much of a politician, and politicians found him too careless of consequences."⁷⁰ To implement his policy, Gregory held a series of Lenten synods at the Lateran which he and his ministers completely dominated. For the first time, abbots sat with bishops at these assemblies—Gregory could expect them to be on his side. At the conclusion of the meetings, papal legates took to the highways to inform and reform the local churches. Gregory's correspondence supplemented their activities.

The first of the synods was held in 1073; the following year saw legislation enacted which deposed all priests guilty of simony. The eleventh canon of this same council, claiming to follow the Council of Nicaea, ordered that no married priests should officiate at the Eucharist. The pope confirmed the acts of the council by a letter to Bishop Otto of Constance, a prelate not in agreement with Gregory. In it he treated a married priest as one guilty of fornication: "How then shall one be the distributor or server of the holy sacraments who cannot in any wise be partaker of them?"⁷¹ It appears that Gregory assumed the marriage of a cleric was not just illegal but also invalid. Nevertheless, he failed to spell out his views on the validity of marriage for a cleric. To the Archbishop Gebhardt of Salzburg the pontiff simply wrote he must get rid of clerics who refuse to live in continence. There was, of course, significant opposition to Gregory both from secular princes who saw him taking away their power over the church—investiture had been forbidden in 1075—and from churchmen who enjoyed the benefits of the more relaxed past. In Paris a council proceeded to nullify his decrees as "unbearable and therefore irrational."⁷²

69. Walter Ullman, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, (London, 1955), p. 297 n.; Norman H. Cantor, "The Crisis of Western Monasticism, 1050-1130," *American Historical Review*, LXVI (October, 1960), 55 ff.

70. R. W. Southern, *op. cit.*, p. 141. For another view, see Gerd Tellenbach, *Church and State at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 166 ff.

71. Gregory, *Letter to Bishop Otto of Constance*, in Ephraim Emerton, ed., *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII* (New York, 1932), p. 53.

72. Mansi, *op. cit.*, XX, 437-38.

At Worms in January, 1076, a group of German bishops who had been suspended for supporting the emperor Henry IV in his dispute with Gregory over investiture, accused the pope of inflicting wounds upon the church because of "profane innovations." Gregory was charged with being elected illegally, stirring up factionalism, disturbing the tranquility of the church, forcing anyone who sought to be a bishop into unworthy servility, and, cruelest blow of all, the German bishops complained of his close relations with Matilda of Tuscany: ". . . you have filled the entire church, as it were, with the stench of the greatest of scandals, rising from your intimacy and cohabitation with another's wife who is more closely integrated into your household than is necessary. In this affair, our sense of decency is affected more than our legal case, although the general complaint is sounded everywhere that all judgments and all decrees are enacted by women in the Apostolic See."⁷³ When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc, argued that he could not enforce the legislation against married clergy or there would be no priests in England, Gregory allowed the conciliar decrees to be enacted gradually. Lanfranc, therefore, ordered that priests in England might keep their wives, but in the future no married men were to be ordained.⁷⁴

The economic problem due to the loss of church property also occupied Gregory's attention. At one time the revenues attached to the altars of St. Peter's in Rome were being shared by sixty different people. In Arezzo the cathedral had one "deputy" caring for the church while the income attached to it was distributed through a long list of hereditary "custodians."⁷⁵ The Pope believed that only an unmarried clergy could free the church's income from diversion into private families. Eventually, Gregory's efforts were partially successful although not in his lifetime. His struggle to bring the church back to more spiritual concerns had the support of popular opinion even though the clergy were reluctant to give up their wives, and emperor and kings were loath to divest themselves of the right to invest their clerics. He had a view of society which saw clergy and laity in two separate and distinct categories—the former had preeminence, and it was Gregory's intention to put into practice what had been theoretically put forward in church documents for several hundred years. By fortifying the clerical state as a distinct institution with thousands of celibate members, the rights and privileges of the church throughout western Europe were much more likely to be acknowledged than by a married clergy subject to the bonds of feudal society.⁷⁶

With Gregory gone, the enthusiasts' day did not end; in fact, the force he gave it continued to show life. At the council of Clermont of 1095, best remembered for initiating the first crusade, the subject of Nicolaitism also was considered. The first canon, in fact, was on that subject: "No minister of the church, priest, deacon, or subdeacon, may have a wife. If anyone having a wife should presume to offer the Mass, let him remain condemned until the coming of the Lord."⁷⁷ The rigorous Christianity of this era could hardly tolerate anything less than a celibate clergy once the holy war against Islam had been launched.

73. Robert Benson, ed., *Imperial Lives and Letters of the Eleventh Century*, trans., by T. Mommsen and K. F. Morrison (New York, 1962), p. 149.

74. C. N. L. Brooke, "Gregorian reform in action: Clerical marriage in England, 1050-1200," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XII (1956), p. 11.

75. Southern, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-30.

76. Ullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-09; Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy* (New York, 1968), pp. 88-90.

77. Mansi, *op. cit.*, XX, 906.

Yet the bishop who tried to enforce the Gregorian legislation was not always welcome in his diocese. Monastic preachers of celibacy were in danger from the wrath of priests' wives; even archbishops had their problems. In the *Church History* of Odericus Vitalis the story is told of Geoffrey, Archbishop of Rouen, announcing the conciliar directives in the early twelfth century. He ". . . dealt sharply and rigorously with the priests of his diocese. Among other canons of the council which he promulgated was that which interdicted them from commerce with females of any description, and against such transgressors he launched the terrible sentence of excommunication." The assembled clerics murmured against this announcement—one vocal dissenter had to be silenced by the archbishop's bodyguard. When that happened, the priests rioted, attacked the soldiers of the archbishop, and fought to drive them out of the cathedral. But the soldiers and the conciliar legislation won out. The parish priests went home where ". . . they carried the sorrowful tidings to their parishioners and wives, and, to prove the truth of their reports, exhibited the wounds and livid bruises on their persons."⁷⁸

The final legislative blows levelled against clerical marriage came in the twelfth century at the first and second Lateran councils, held in 1123 and 1139. The first Lateran, following upon the resolution of the investiture controversy by the Concordat of Worms in the previous year, was primarily concerned with the agreement between Pope Callistus II and Emperor Henry V on that subject. It met for three weeks with some three hundred bishops and a large number of abbots in attendance. Among the canons passed was one declaring that the marriage of any person in higher orders was invalid.⁷⁹ Thus, church leaders now presumed to say, for the first time, that the clerical order was an impediment to marriage. At the second Lateran council one further step was taken. Although the council met to settle a disputed election between two papal claimants, the members of the synod completed the work of the first Lateran by forbidding the ordination of married men.⁸⁰

The legislation of the Latin church remained unchanged from the twelfth century to the twentieth despite strong efforts to remove the ban on clerical marriage at the councils of Constance and Trent. By the fourteenth century the vigor of the reform movement had been spent, and the married priest was the rule rather than the exception up to the period of the Counter Reformation. From the seventeenth to the twentieth century the law of clerical celibacy was accepted and enforced to a degree never before witnessed in the history of Christianity. In the past decade, however, discussion of mandatory clerical celibacy recommenced as questions were raised concerning its validity in the modern era. More enlightened attitudes towards sexuality and marriage have destroyed the primitive connection between sexual abstinence and ritual purity, and the alienation of church property is no longer a threat. Moreover, there has been a general disenchantment among the secular clergy with ascetic ideals born of the monastic life during periods of extreme fervor. The pope and bishops generally resist change, still fearing that a married priesthood would diminish their power, an opinion which they have in common with their twelfth-century predecessors.

78. Odericus Vitalis, *Church History*, in V. B. Ross and M. McLaughlin, *Portable Medieval Reader* (New York, 1960), p. 75.

79. Canon 7 in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, p. 167.

80. Canons 6 and 7, *ibid.*, p. 174; Mansi, *op. cit.*, XXI, 715.



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SEXUAL EQUALITY AND THE CULT OF VIRGINITY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Jo Ann McNamara

Early Christianity grew out of a religious milieu that was rarely favorable to women. Some pagan sects wove fears and prejudices about the functions of women into the fabric of their beliefs. Others excluded them from worship altogether. Judaism also took a dim view of the sex which, through Eve, had supplied the instrument of humanity's downfall. Women were excluded from most acts of public worship and subjected to rituals which assumed that they were polluted by nature. The early Christians were not exempt from the predispositions of their contemporaries. There were no mothers of the Church and most of the fathers confined their procreative instincts to the products of the intellect, eschewing the sexual society of women. It would be all too easy to gather a large body of evidence exposing their fear of the seductions of women and their revulsion against her physical functions. In moments of moral passion, normally prudent preachers and writers were all too prone to lapse into diatribes against the offensive behavior and questionable moral capacity of women. I need not labor the point. For some time now, both feminist and anticlerical writers have made this literature familiar to us all.

Despite these predispositions, however, patristic writers were committed to the doctrine that with God there is neither male nor female. Thus, despite the personal proclivities of many of its formulators, the logic of Christian doctrine required a commitment to sexual equality. Nevertheless, before the achievement of that state of bliss in which sexual differences were to be erased in the mind of God, Christian women and men were to resolve the real and apparent differences that determined their earthly condition. The curses laid on Adam and Eve still burdened humanity in its mortal state and the makers of Christian doctrine were much concerned with the reconciliation of the doctrine of spiritual equality with the practical conditions of life.

It cannot be said that Christianity always moved in a direction favorable to the aspirations of women. In the primitive community, Christian women appear to have enjoyed a better relationship with their brethren than they were to have in later centuries. In the earliest writing produced by the new religion, Paul assumed that women and men would worship together.¹ His instruction that women must be veiled when praying and prophesying implied that the segregation to which they had formerly been subjected would be replaced by a simple difference of clothing.² Prophetesses continued to teach until the third century when the activities of free-lance teachers of both sexes began to fall into disrepute.³ The earliest constitutions of the church formalized the

equal position of women as members of the congregation.⁴ On the other side, however, women were totally excluded from the ranks of the emerging priesthood, which constituted a major loss of position in the community. In at least one case, this exclusion was defended on the grounds that the natural pollution of the female body rendered women ineligible to participate in the sacrifice of the altar.⁵

This argument exposes a predisposition among early Christians to denigrate the very nature of women. Patristic writers ultimately condemned this tendency but it was never entirely expunged from their minds. Paul himself had likened the inferior relationship of the wife to the husband as a parallel to the inferiority of the flesh to the spirit.⁶ His successors, through the fifth century, sought to deal with this dichotomy in a variety of ways. Substantial numbers of Christians embraced the extremist position that women were to be identified with the flesh, the flesh with the world, and the world with evil itself.⁷ Procreation in particular was viewed as the instrument of the devil in his eternal struggle with God.⁸ These views, however, were unequivocally condemned by the fathers, who fought grimly against the heretical tendency to weaken God's claim to be the sole creative power in the universe. The orthodox view of the nature of God and the necessary goodness of his creative design implied an intrinsic defense of the nature of women.⁹ Moreover, the inherent demands of their logic imposed a recognition of the fact that woman differs from man only in the functions attendant upon her as wife and mothers:

For if the God of both is one, the master of both is also one; one church, one temperament, one modesty; their food is common, marriage an equal yoke; respiration, sight, hearing, knowledge, hope, obedience, love, all alike. And those whose life is common have common graces and a salvation in common; common to them are love and training. "For in this world," He says, "they marry and are given in marriage," (Luke 20-34) in which alone the female is distinguished from the male. Common therefore, too, to men and women is the name of man.¹⁰

The Pauline metaphor was attacked and its contradictions resolved in two ways by the fifth century. Augustine's exegesis denied that Paul had ever intended to equate the wife with the flesh except to command that men should love their wives as they love their own bodies:

And yet the woman received not the pattern from the body, or flesh, to be so subject to the husband as the flesh is to the spirit; . . . but the man did, for this reason: because although the spirit lusteth against the flesh, even in this it consults for the good of the flesh; not likewise, the flesh lusting against the spirit, for such opposition consults neither for the good of the spirit nor for its own.¹¹

A simpler, if less ingenious, formulation was devised by Paulinus of Nola in a letter to a married men: "You are her head in Christ and she is your foundation."¹² The same bishop summarized the Christian opinion on the spiritual equality of women and men by pointing out that God chose to incarnate himself as a man and to be born of a woman "so that the creator of both sexes might make both holy."¹³

The same writers who defended the intrinsic equality of the spiritual natures of women and men were not backward in granting a large measure of equality to their physical capacities as well. The intellectual abilities of women were also generally ad-

mitted and their capacity to study and teach both women and men was often admired.¹⁴ Indeed, the fourth-century biographer of the eastern saints, Palladius, went so far as to criticize St. Jerome for having thwarted the genius of his assistant, Paula, by subjecting to his own scholarly pursuits "a mind that was well able to surpass everyone else."¹⁵ Women were further conceded to be capable of considerable effectiveness in warfare and politics. The controversial Byzantine bishop Chrysostom was the exception in his belief that women were suited only to the lesser and more delicate activity of the home.¹⁶ In the world of the late Roman Empire, no one had very far to look if they wished to discover women occupying influential positions. Indeed, Chrysostom himself paid dearly for his failure to respect the power of the Empress. Moreover, the Old Testament provided a wealth of historical examples.¹⁷ Justin Martyr considered the study of classical literature, with its rich testimony to the powers of women at court and in battle, unsuitable for Christians because of the unseemliness of the models. But he never doubted that women could and did participate effectively in politics and war.¹⁸ Clement of Alexandria devoted a lengthy passage to the military achievements of pagan and barbarian women, but concluded: "We do not train our women like the Amazons to manliness in war for we wish even our men to be peaceable."¹⁹ Such reservations were nullified when the physical courage of the battlefield was transformed into that of the martyrs. In the late second century, the spokesman for the martyrs of Lyon paid special tribute to the Christian women who heroically passed through the ordeals of the arena to win the crown of martyrdom. The long ordeal of the slave woman, Blandina, was singled out to prove "that the things among men which appear mean and obscure and contemptible, with God are deemed worthy of the greatest glory. . . . For although small and weak and greatly despised she put on the great and invincible athlete Christ and in many contests overcame the adversary."²⁰

With such standards before their eyes, the fathers had little patience with arguments drawn from assertions about the weaknesses of women to excuse them from the more rigorous demands of religion. Tertullian, who argued that a second marriage should be regarded as adultery, scoffed at the excuse that a woman needed the protection of a man.²¹ When young women and men consecrated to virginity excused their practice of setting up joint households on the grounds that the women were thus protected from the corrupting atmosphere of the market place, Chrysostom pointed out that the market place was full of women buying and selling and that if, perhaps, it was not the best place for a virgin, it was certainly preferable to the proposed alternative.²² Jerome showed similar misgivings about the propriety, but not the capacity of women to operate in the market place: "I certainly do not know if she who is engaged in shop keeping remains a virgin in body, but I do know that she does not remain a virgin in spirit."²³ The argument of propriety was always subject to consideration of the alternatives and the motives of the individual. Thus a certain Amanda, who took charge of the administration of her own estates and those of her husband, was praised for "interposing her holy slavery" between her husband and the world, "confronting worldly needs as a tower founded on unbudging rock confronts the storm," in order to free her husband for a life of contemplation.²⁴

From these examples, we can already perceive that although the fathers put few limitations on what women could do, they were much more restrictive in their view of what they should do. Their idea of the life suitable to Christian women relied on two models: Martha and Mary, the one busy with the cares of the household and the other sitting rapt at the feet of Jesus among the apostles. Then, as now, they could reasonably expect the majority of women to take up the life of Martha, the wife and mother.

As we have seen, Paul instructed married women to be subject to their husbands.²⁵ This was reiterated in one of the earliest pieces of post-Apostolic writing: "You exhorted girls to do their duty with a blameless, modest, and pure conscience. And you taught married women to love their husbands as they should, to be subject to them according to the laws of obedience and to manage their homes with much piety and wisdom."²⁶ The subjection of wives, as envisaged by the patristic writers, was never intended to be total or unquestioning. Even in the ordinary course of marriage, the husband's superiority was limited by the claims of love and duty, as Ambrose of Milan preached: "You are not her lord but her husband; and she is not the maidservant but your wife. God desires that you guide the inferior sex, not dominate it."²⁷ Moreover, the husband's role of guide did not confer a one-sided power upon him. Paul ordered each partner to give the other her or his due sexually: "For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does."²⁸ Between married persons, this claim took precedence over almost all others. Even the desire of one partner to embrace a life of celibacy could not free them from the power of the spouse. Saint Melania obeyed her husband to the extent of bearing two children before she could persuade him to abandon the marriage bed.²⁹ Augustine advised a man who had broken a vow of continence in order to marry to urge his wife to join him in celibacy. But, he concluded, if she were not willing to do so, the husband must maintain his conjugal fidelity and hope that God would forgive him for the broken vow.³⁰

Within marriage, the most substantial distinction between the partners, aside from the obvious physical differences, was in the type of labor apportioned to each. In this respect, Christian thinking was generally very conservative. The *Apostolic Constitution* devoted an entire section to a discussion of the labor suitable to women and its claim to honor.³¹ One of the few married fathers, Clement of Alexandria, gave immediacy to this general picture with his portrait of the Christian family sitting together on a winter's evening: he with his books and she at her spinning, "each with his proper occupation."³² Jerome, who approved of marriage only because it produced new virgins, never tired of describing the never-ending hectic round of activities that must fill the days of a busy wife.³³ The virtuous and hard-working wife, however, was not to be denigrated. Writing to his own wife, Tertullian described the union of "two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice. They are in very truth two in one flesh and where there is but one flesh there is also but one spirit."³⁴ Martha had her place and it was not without honor. But, by virtue of the married state, Martha also had her subjection to bear: "A woman

is not inferior in her own person. It is because of her condition, not her nature, that she is subjected to man and ordered to fear him."³⁵

The condition of the married woman was, after all, only a temporal condition. It would cease to be when the soul was released from the greater bondage of life on earth. Meanwhile, the nature of women, like that of man, was essentially spiritual. The restrictions of marriage were dissolved if they conflicted with the demands of morality which the fathers assumed to be binding equally on both sexes. Occasionally, they felt the need to remind the reader that women were included under the category "man" where no specific distinction was made.³⁶ More commonly, they were compelled to remind men that they were obligated to the same sexual restrictions as women. Modesty, simplicity of dress, decorum in behavior, avoidance of temptation and care not to be tempting oneself, were standards for both sexes.³⁷ Ambrose was simply repeating a Christian truism when he stated that "all sexual violation is adultery and what is not allowed to a woman is also not allowed to a man."³⁸ Caesarius of Arles spelled this out at length in a sermon addressed to men who thought that sexual lapses were unimportant as long as they were not committed by a woman. He bade the man tormented by hot blood to cool himself with fasting, and specifically prohibited sexual relations with prostitutes and concubines, women taken as booty in war, or slaves. Adulterous men were to be subjected to the same penalties as adulterous women and men who demanded virgin brides must themselves be virginal. Caesarius viewed the double standard as an outrage:

As though God gave two commandments, one for men and another for women! . . . How is it that some men are so insolent that they say cruel vice is lawful for men but not for women! They do not reflect that men and women have been redeemed equally by Christ's blood, have been cleansed by the very same baptism, approach the Lord's altar to receive his body and blood together, and that with God there are no distinctions of male or female.³⁹

Furthermore, no one doubted that in practice, the woman might be the moral superior of the man. This was considered by Paul in discussing the problem of the Christian wife of a pagan husband, whom he advised to save her husband if she could.⁴⁰ In dealing with the same problem, Tertullian dwelt on the dangers for the Christian wife: "Every Christian woman is obliged to obey the will of God. Yet how can she serve two masters, the Lord and her husband . . . ? Let her take care how she discharges her duties to her husband."⁴¹ Even between Christians, a virtuous woman might find herself joined to a vicious man. Arguing that women and men have equal capacities for perfection, Clement of Alexandria advised the virtuous woman to make every effort to persuade her husband to unite with her in pursuit of the good. If she failed, she might then ask permission of him to proceed alone. But at the last, if necessary, she must disobey her husband rather than turn from the path of virtue.⁴²

This was no simple-minded preaching, for these fathers wrote in dangerous days when women were paying the price of blood for the rewards of virtue. In the second century, Justin Martyr described the death of a woman who was betrayed to the persecutors by a husband who refused to support her efforts to reform a dissolute life.⁴³ A century later, Cyprian of Carthage described the similar case of a lady named Bona "who was dragged by her husband to sacrifice, who did not pollute her conscience,

but as those holding her hands sacrificed, she herself began to cry out against this: 'I have not done it!' ”⁴⁴ She and her sisters in the arena had earned the right to say, with the slave martyr Ariadne, that her masters might command her body but not her soul.⁴⁵

In less dramatic circumstances, it was taken for granted that a wife should play an active and, where necessary, leading part in the joint effort to win salvation. Chrysostom offered many helpful examples of wives whose advice had led their husbands to the right path.⁴⁶ Paulinus of Nola consoled a widower that he had the remainder of his life to strive for equality with the dead woman, “who was mature and complete in Holiness” in the world to come.⁴⁷ The biographer of Melania the Younger dwelt at length on the seductions which she practiced to woo her husband to a life of celibacy and to keep him faithful to it. With Melania, however, we are introduced to a new idea whose attraction proved compelling to many women of the fourth century. On their wedding day, she said to her husband:

If you wish, my lord, to practice chastity with me and live with me under the law of continence, I will recognize you as lord and master of my whole life; but if that seems too heavy, if you cannot support the ardor of youth, here are all my goods at your feet to use, as master, however you will. Only free my body, so that I may present it with my soul unblemished to Christ on the redoubtable day.⁴⁸

The proposition, however, came too late. Melania had entered into the subjection of the marriage bond and it was only after she had borne two children that she finally succeeded in winning her husband's cooperation in undertaking the celibate life. For many of her contemporaries, however, no claims of mastery or conjugal duties stood in their way. From the outset they gave themselves to the life of virginity.

Many social conditions and psychological pressures united with the religious attitudes at the base of the ascetic movement. But as it reached its flowering, Christian women were presented with one over-riding and consistent argument. The life of Martha was one of honor and salvation was well within her grasp. But Mary had chosen the better part and, as Christ had promised, it should not be taken from her. The sweet yoke which which bound two souls in love was still a yoke. As Ambrose said, married women and men could at best be one flesh and one spirit, but neither could ever be free.⁴⁹ The classic statement of the problem was drawn from Paul:

But I would have you to be free from cares. He that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord; but he that is married is careful for the things of the world, how he may please his wife. And there is a difference also between the wife and the virgin. She that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married is careful for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.⁵⁰

For centuries thereafter, the growing literature in praise of virginity reverted to this rule, repeated it and refined upon it. The image of marriage as bondage was elaborated in the most uncompromising detail. For example, the process of entering the bond in the the first place was likened to being placed in the slave market:

How miserable is she who, to find a husband is put up, as it were, for sale, so that the one who offers the highest bribe obtains her. Slaves are sold for better terms, for they often choose their masters; if a virgin chooses her husband it is an offence, but if she is not chosen, it is an insult. And, though

she is fair and beautiful, she both fears and wishes to be seen. She wishes to be seen so that she may fetch a better price; she fears to be seen lest the very fact of her being seen should not be fitting. What fears and suspicions she experiences as to how her suitors will turn out? She is afraid that a poor man may trick her or a noble one despise her.⁵¹

And once married, what could the wife hope for? At best, she must endure a constant round of harassment in the wearing care of her household and children, seeking to please her husband and accomplish all her work.⁵² The horrors of childbearing with its danger and pain were dwelt on in the most lurid detail. Saint Melania, who had suffered two extraordinarily agonizing births before being released to the chaste life, brought her company of virgins with her when called to assist in a difficult labor so that they might see what afflictions attended life in the world.⁵³ Both Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa, who were married, stressed that the very happiness of marriage was ultimately rooted in misery. The more two people loved one another, the greater their anxiety that they lose one another must be. The "bitter pleasure of children," too, brought only fear of loss and failure.⁵⁴ Even in the best of marriages, the happiness of the wife was fraught with anxiety for her husband:

And since, according to the divine plan, the wife does not govern herself, but has her place of refuge in the one who has power over her through marriage, if she is separated from him for even a short time, it is as if she has been deprived of her head. She cannot endure the separation . . . she keeps her eyes glued to the door, full of worry and fright. She pays too much attention to gossip. Her heart is scourged by fear, tortured even before any news is brought back. At the door there is only knocking, real or imagined, as if some messenger of evil had suddenly and violently shaken her soul. . . . Such is the life of the happy pair!

And as for the others:

Come to the law courts, read the marriage laws. See there the abominations of marriage. For just as when you hear the doctor's description of various diseases, you recognize the wretchedness of the human body, since you learn what evils it can be afflicted with, so when you read the marriage laws and discover the many illegalities of marriage for which fines are inflicted, you perceive clearly the circumstances of marriage.⁵⁵

The conclusion is obvious. From best to worst, marriage is a state of bondage from which the only escape is celibacy. Happy the woman or man who had never been subjected at all but had preserved her or his virginity! These praises of the virginal state were not the result of an attitude antithetical to sexual relations in themselves. The same writers produced a considerable literature defending the claims of marriage as a virtuous and worthwhile state.⁵⁶ Nor did they proceed from enmity toward women; the same literature was addressed to men. Virginity was presented as an ideal higher state of being for all and, practically considered, as an opportunity to obtain freedom from that condition which alone defined the inferior status of the female.

At the very least, the virgin woman could expect release from the governance of a husband and the chains of children. She was free of the burden of worldly cares and responsibilities that weighed her sisters down. On a higher plane, she was almost free of the mortal coil itself:

Those who refrain from procreation of death by preventing it from advancing further because of them, and, by setting themselves up as a kind of boundary stone between life and death, they keep

death from going forward. If, then, death is not able to outwit virginity, but through it comes to an end and ceases to be, this is clear proof that virginity is stronger than death.⁵⁷

And, again, in giving instruction to a consecrated girl, Jerome stated:

I would not have you subject to that sentence whereby condemnation has been passed upon mankind. When God said to Eve, "In pain and sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," say to yourself, "That is a law for married women, not for me." . . . And when last of all, he says, "Thou shalt surely die" once more, say, "Marriage indeed must end in death; but the life on which I have resolved is independent of sex. Let those who are wives keep the place and the time that properly belong to them."⁵⁸

Examples of Christian virgins go back, of course, to the foundation of the religion—to the Virgin Mary herself. Legend provided Paul with a virgin companion who was said to have risked her life to embrace Christianity and flee the married life.⁵⁹ From the second century on, the consecrated virgin and the consecrated widow were recognized members of the Christian community and their number multiplied steadily through the fourth and fifth centuries when really large communities of such women were beginning to be established. The reward of their self-denial was social honor and a promise that they would be first in the ranks of the saints in heaven. On earth, they enjoyed the freedom natural to their state.

The freedom promised by the writers in praise of virginity was no mirage. Critics of the actual behavior of the virgins are almost as plentiful as admirers of their state. Again and again, they were warned against pride and vaingloriousness.⁶⁰ They were repeatedly censured for adopting the frivolous dress, language, and deportment of courtesans rather than the decorous manner fitting to the consecrated.⁶¹ We have already seen the reservations of Chrysostom and Jerome regarding the market place as a suitable place for virgins. But Chrysostom was obliged to approve even the market as a superior milieu to the joint households of female and male virgins he saw around him, where the wise women were called in regularly to furnish proof that the virgin was still intact.⁶² It is abundantly clear, therefore, that a number of women seized the promise of freedom but used it in a way that was far from the intention of the fathers, for whom the object of the virgin life was to achieve perfection in sanctity. The life of Mary was envisaged as a heroic and self-sacrificing life of prayer, study, and charity, to be embraced only by the wisest and hardest working of women.⁶³

Such a woman, with her virgin brother, stood on the most elevated level of the spiritual hierarchy. Since woman's special condition was defined by her status as a wife, the virgin must be viewed as having transcended that condition and therefore the limitations placed on her sex. However, that transcendence was not always easy to express in the linguistic patterns of the fathers. Chrysostom, carried away in praise of female virginity, enthused: "Not until Christ appeared, could women eclipse men in sanctity, fervor, devotion and love of God."⁶⁴ On the other side, we can frequently find men being included among the "Brides of Christ." To be sure, the fathers did not forget that the category "man" included woman. But they had an ineradicable tendency to characterize certain psychological qualities as "masculine" and others as "feminine." And, it must be added, that their instinctive tendency was to equate "masculine" with

the higher attributes.⁶⁵ As a result of these predispositions of style, the sexual equality obtained by virgins was habitually expressed by viewing them as having become men. Thus Gregory of Nazianzus praised the masculine soul of his widowed mother.⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa wondered whether he could call his sister, Macrina, a woman, since she had "gone beyond the nature of a woman."⁶⁷ Of the elder Melania, an admirer wrote: "What a woman she is, if one can call so virile a Christian a woman . . . a soldier of Christ with the virtues of Martin, though she is of the weaker sex . . . as a strong member of the weak sex, she might arraign idle men."⁶⁸

It cannot be denied that such language betrays a deep-seated tendency to despise the nature of women.⁶⁹ Like most of their contemporaries, the fathers were infused with age-old prejudices which were heightened in this age by an atmosphere of sexual confusion and uncertainty. They were struggling against their own predispositions in a society that was producing heretical teachers preaching strange and disturbing transsexual images of the spiritual world.⁷⁰ Men as well as women were going beyond the limits of conventional behavior to escape from the bonds of sexuality. By the third century, the orthodox church had to adopt stringent doctrinal positions against men who too literally followed Christ's suggestion that "some make themselves eunuchs for the sake of heaven."⁷¹ Jerome warned his virginal pupil against emulating those virgins who "change their garb and assume the mien of men, being ashamed of what they were born to be—women. They cut off their hair and are not ashamed to look like eunuchs." Conversely, he went on to condemn men who dressed as women and forsook their true nature.⁷²

Fourth and fifth century hagiography reflected this trend with the recurring theme of the woman who lived in a monastery as one of the monks. There are many variations on the tale: the imposter might have disguised herself as a man to escape the importunities of a suitor, to protect herself while traveling or, straightforwardly, in order to gain admission to the ascetic community. Her sex might be revealed accidentally, or by death, or as a defense against some slanderous sexual charge.⁷³ Probably we shall never know how much truth is embedded in these romantic fantasies, but Jerome's warning seems to suggest that they were not entirely ill-founded. And yet there were sisterhoods in the desert to which such women might well have gone. The pious folk of that age were at least prepared to believe that holy women might choose to become men and that God would bless them for it. At a somewhat later period, Gregory the Great recorded the ultimate progress of this tendency in the tale of a widow who was warned by her doctors that if she pursued her determination to live in continence, the superabundance of heat generated by this repression would cause her to grow a beard like a man. According to Gregory, she gladly accepted that deformity for her soul's good.⁷³

Despite the initial confusions in their language and the distortions developed in the minds of the vulgar, it was certainly not the object of the fathers to turn women into men through the virgin life. Rather, they were seeking to express the absolute equality which the two sexes enjoyed outside the limitations of marriage. A monk named Sinnius formed a brotherhood of women and men where "by his revered way of life, he drove out his own masculine desires and by his mastery he bridled the feminine traits

of the women so that the scriptures were fulfilled: In Christ, there is neither male nor female."⁷⁴ Even a married couple might aspire to that condition of spiritual equality achieved by virgins if they abstained from sexual relations. Thus Augustine praised such a couple, Aper and Amanda, especially the wife who "did not lead her husband to effeminacy and greed but . . . to self-discipline and courage . . . restored and reinstated into unity with you, for Christ's love joins you with spiritual bonds. . . . You have passed from your own bodies into that of Christ."⁷⁵ Melania the Younger's biographer noted that male monks received her into their monasteries as though she were a man, "for she had gone beyond the limits of her sex and acquired a virile mentality." Then, bethinking himself of the implications of this image, he added, "or rather a celestial one."⁷⁶ That was the real object of the Christian: to attain the "celestial mentality," the state transcending all sexual differences. It was most easily achieved by virgins who were free from sexual bondage but others were not barred from the attempt.

As a conclusion, I should like to present the personal testimony of one woman who recorded her experiences in prison awaiting martyrdom. Perpetua and her slave girl Felicitas were both mothers and both condemned to the beasts. Even while awaiting the terrible contest, Perpetua complained of the pain of her breasts where the milk was unsucked, and the pain in her heart for the baby who had been taken away from her. But at night, haunted by the vision of what was awaiting her, she dreamed that she stood in the arena: "And because I knew that I was condemned to the beasts, I marvelled that beasts were not sent out against me. But there came out against me a certain ill-favored Egyptian with his helpers to fight me. . . . And I was stripped, and I became a man. . . ."⁷⁷ There follows an account of the dream battle in which she gained the victory. Apparently, Perpetua dreamed of herself as a man because she expected to play the part of a man in battle. Her perception was very like that of Augustine, who preached in praise of her and her companion:

Perpetua and Felicity were not only of the female kind but were very women . . . and mothers likewise, that unto the frailty of that sex might be added a more importunate love.⁷⁸

.....

For what thing might there be more glorious than these women, whom men may wonder at sooner than they may imitate? But this is chiefly the glory of Him, in whom they that do believe and they that with holy zeal in his name do contend one with another are indeed, according to the inward man neither male nor female; so that even in them that are women in body the manliness of their souls hideth the sex of their flesh and we may scarce think of that in their bodily condition which they suffered not to appear in their deeds.⁷⁹

The manliness of the virgin woman was a transcendence of the sexual nature itself. In extreme circumstances, it could also be achieved by the nonvirginal. But in essence the equality of which the Christian fathers wrote was a celestial condition, not a temporal one. Social reform was not their object. In general they viewed social inequities, violence, and oppression as evils that grew out of man's original fall from grace. As long as humanity was born in sin and had failed to achieve complete reconciliation with God the world would be afflicted with these evils. Their aim, therefore, was to pursue a system that would free the life of the soul from the world of sin and strife and achieve

its ultimate redemption. They sought to bring women and men alike to that state of grace in which there would be neither bond nor free, neither male nor female.

NOTES

¹I *Corinthians* 11.5. See also Madeleine Boucher, "Some unexplored parallels to I Cor. 11-12 and Galatians 3, 28: The New Testament on the Role of Women," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969): 50-58. And, for a more general view: Johannes Leipoldt, *Die Frau in der Antiken Welt und in Urchristentum* (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1954).

²The interpretation of Paul's instructions are explored at length by Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola* 23, 24-25, *Patrologia Latina* (PL), ed., Jacques P. Migne, 61, 273.

³The names of these prophets and prophetesses and their work is preserved by Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5.17.3, *Sources Chrétiennes* (SC) 41, 54.

⁴*Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, II, 57, ed., Franciscus X. Funk (Torino: Botteghe d'ediz., 1905), pp. 160-66.

⁵The Apostolic Constitutions, *ibid.*, retain earlier sections which are contradicted in the text. Section 3, 2, p. 208, advised the ordination of deaconesses for the baptism of women, while Section 3, 6, p. 190, prohibited the teaching of women on the grounds that Christ did not include women among the twelve apostles, despite the presence of eligible women among the disciples. Section 3, 9, pp. 198-200, forbade women to perform baptism on the grounds that if Christ had wished to allow it he would have been baptized by his own mother and that a woman in the role of a priest, though known to Gentile paganism, was contrary to the laws of nature. The latter argument was vividly restated by the author of the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, 3.24, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (ANCL), eds., Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), 17, 67. He expressed horror at the sight of women performing sacred rites: "being in her courses . . . [she] is stained with blood; and then she pollutes those who touch her."

⁶*Ephesians* 5.21. The question of the authenticity of the Pauline letters has been much debated. This letter in particular is generally held to be a product of another author. A broader discussion is available in Frederick R. Crownfield, *A Historical Approach to the New Testament* (New York: Harper: 1960), p. 248, who questions even passages in letters conceded to be authentic, where they command the subordination of women. See also Jean J. von Allmen, *Maris et femmes d'après Saint Paul* (Paris: Delachaux et Niestle S. A., 1951) and Else Kähler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Begriffes der Unterordnung* (Zurich: Gotthelf, 1960). For the purposes of this article, however, the Pauline letters will be treated as equally authoritative because the patristic authors cited here considered them to have scriptural authority.

⁷For example, the Gospel of the Egyptians, cited by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.9, *ANF*, 2, 392.

⁸This theme runs through the teachings of various gnostics and Manichaeans throughout our period. For further discussion of their ideas, see Joseph C. Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia: An Inquiry into the Concept of the Church as Mother in Early Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1943), and, on a more general level, Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963). The antifeminist impact is outlined by Jean Leclercq, "Un témoin de l'antiféminisme du moyen âge," *Revue Benedictine* 80 (1970): 304-309.

⁹See the treatises written against these heretics by Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, *ANF*, 1, Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, *ANCL* 6, and others. The limitations of their defense of women are shown by the continuation of superstitions regarding woman's nature and

physique as shown as Vern Bullough, "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women," *Viator* 4 (1973): 484-501.

¹⁰Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogos*, 1.4, trans., Simon P. Wood (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), p. 12.

¹¹*De Continentia* 23, PL 40, 366.

¹²*Epistola* 44, 4, PL 61, 589.

¹³*Epistola* 23, 14, PL 61, 265.

¹⁴Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 33, ANF 2, 78, defended the philosophic studies of Christian women against the mockery of the Greeks by citing the fame of female philosophers among the pagans and claiming superior wisdom for the Christian women. Eusebius, *Historia*, 6, 4, SC 41, 90, praised the female pupils of Origen who suffered martyrdom in the persecution of the third century. A number of individual women were praised for their scholarship in the fourth and fifth centuries, for example, Gregory of Nyssa's praise of his sister Macrina in her biography, *Vie de Sainte Macrina*, SC, 178, and his demonstration of her learning in the *Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection*, included in *Ascetical Works*, trans., Virginia W. Callahan (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1966). Jerome, who surrounded himself with learned women, wrote: "They will convict themselves of pride, rather than me of folly, who judge of virtue not by the sex but by the mind." *Epistola* 127, *Ad Principiam Virginem de Vita Sanctae Marcellae*, ed., F. A. Wright (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1933), p. 450.

¹⁵Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 141, 2, trans., Robert T. Meyer, *Ancient Christian Writers* (ACW), 34 (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1965).

¹⁶*Sur la dignité de mariage*, 4, men and women live in two worlds, public and private and God has introduced the more important and useful to men and the lesser and humbler to women, in France Quère-Jaulmes, *Le mariage dans l'église ancienne* (Paris: Editions du centurion, 1969).

¹⁷Clement of Rome, *Ad Corinthios que dicuntur epistolae*, 55, 4, ed., Oscar Gebhardt and Adolf Harnack, *Patrum Apostolicarum Opera* (Leipzig, 1876), p. 91.

¹⁸Justin Martyr, *Discourse to the Greeks*, 2, ANF 1, 271.

¹⁹*Stromata*, 4, 8, ANF 2, 419.

²⁰Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5, 1, 18-41, SC, 41, 10-17.

²¹*Ad Uxorem*, 1.4, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (CCSL), 1, 377.

²²*Comment observer la virginité*, 5, ed., J. Dumortier, *Nouvelle Collection de textes et documents* (Paris: Société Guillaume Bude, 1955).

²³*Adversus Helvidium: Liber de perpetua virginitate b. Mariae*, 21, PL 23, 214.

²⁴Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola* 44, PL 61, 388.

²⁵*I Corinthians* 11.1; *Ephesians* 5.21; *Colossians*, 4.1.

²⁶Clement of Rome, *Ad Corinthios*, 10.

²⁷*Hexameron*, 5.7, PL 14, 214.

²⁸*I Corinthians* 7:3-14; similar sentiments are expressed in *Ephesians* 5:29.

²⁹*Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, trans., Denys Gorce (Les éditions du cerf: Paris, 1962).

³⁰*Epistola* 127, PL 33, 483. This power, however, was broken by death. In urging his wife not to marry again if she should be widowed, Tertullian was anxious to explain that he was not attempting to enforce a proprietary claim on his wife's body, a claim ended forever by death, *Ad Uxorem*, 1, 1, CCSL 1, 373. I have further examined the question of celibate marriage in a paper given at the Medieval Institute of Western Michigan, 1974, called "Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy." See also Pierre de Labriolle, "Le mariage spirituel dans l'antiquité chrétienne," *Revue Historique*, 137 (1921): 204-25.

³¹*Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, 1, 3, 8.

³²*Stromata* 4, 20, ANF 2, 432. A broader discussion of Clement's writings on marriage can be found in Richard B. Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria: A study in Christian Liberalism* (London: Williams, 1914).

³³*Adversus Helvidium*, 20, PL 23, 214.

³⁴*Ad Uxorem*, 2, 6, CCSL 1, 393.

³⁵Ambrose, *Commentaria in epistolam ad Ephesios*, 5, 32, PL 17, 399.

³⁶For example, Cyprian, *De habitu virginum* 4; *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), 3, 190. Christ's praises of virginity were not confined to men alone but to both sexes, for women are part of men. Most exotically, Augustine, *Epistola*, 211, PL 33, 964, reminded the nuns that the scriptural saying, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer," was intended to apply also to women who must obey whatever is enjoined upon men.

³⁷*Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, 1, 2, p. 5-6, enjoined men to be compassionate, bountiful and willing to please their wives while forbidding them to adorn themselves in such a manner as to attract the interest of other women. Ibid., 1, 3, p. 8, says exactly the same commandment is laid on women. Clement of Alexandria *Paedagogos*, 7, ANF, 2, 252, warned both young women and men to avoid banquets where they would be beset by temptations and young unmarried men who found themselves obliged to attend were warned to keep their eyes on the ground and otherwise comport themselves in a manner which would keep them out of temptation.

³⁸*De Abraham*, 1, 35, CSEL 32, 1, 519. See also Jerome, *Epistola* 77, *Ad Oceanum*, 3, PL 22, 691 and the elaborations of Augustine, *De conjugii adulterinis*, 1, 8, PL 40, 456.

³⁹Caesarius of Aries, *Sermo* 42, CCSL 103, 186.

⁴⁰I. *Corinthians* 7:14.

⁴¹*Ad Uxorem*, 2, 4, CCSL 1, 388.

⁴²*Stromata*, 14, 19.

⁴³*Second Apology*, 2, ANF, 1, 188.

⁴⁴Cyprian, *Epistola*, 24, CSEL 32, 537.

⁴⁵Cited with other examples by Paul Allard, *Histoire des persecutions* (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1911).

⁴⁶*Homily 61 on John*, 4, *Library of the Fathers*, 36 (Oxford: 1852), p. 540.

⁴⁷*Epistola* 13, PL 61, 223.

⁴⁸*La Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 131.

⁴⁹*De institutione virginis*, 1, 6, PL 16, 320.

⁵⁰I. *Corinthians* 7:32-34.

⁵¹Ambrose, *De virginibus*, 1, 56, PL 16, 215.

⁵²Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium*, PL 23, 214.

⁵³Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 249.

⁵⁴Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*, 1, 5, CCSL, 1, 374.

⁵⁵Gregory of Nyssa, *Traité de la virginité*, 3, SC 114, 290-301.

⁵⁶For example, Augustine *De bono conjugali*, CSEL 41. Even Methodius' whose *Symposium* consists of ten monologues delivered by a gathering of women on the subject of chastity, gave over one of the addresses to a defense of the married state and its procreative element, c. 2, SC 95, 69.

⁵⁷Gregory of Nyssa, *Traité de la virginité*, 14, SC 119, 434 ff.

⁵⁸Jerome, *Ad Eustochium*, 18, PL 22, 405.

⁵⁹For a discussion of the various versions of this story see William M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 375 ff.

⁶⁰This trend is summed up by Augustine's warning that the marriage of the faithful is to be set up above the virginity of the impious, *De bono conjugali*, 8, CSEL, 41, 198.

⁶¹For example, Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*, CSEL 31, 185.

⁶²*Comment observer la virginité*, 1-2, p. 100.

⁶³Methodius, *Symposium*, 1, SC 95, 57.

⁶⁴PG 62, 99.

⁶⁵This is most elaborately worked out in a novel of unknown date dealing with the adventures of Saint Peter and wrongly attributed to his companion, Clement of Rome, *Recognitions*, *Homily* 3, ANCL 17. More typical is the type of remark made by Augustine, *De bono conjugali*, 20, CSEL 41, 213, that men's capacity for reproduction is superior to that of women—a man can get children with more women than women with men—which demonstrates the universal power of things principle.

⁶⁶*Epitaph for his mother*, no. 70, PG 38, 47.

⁶⁷Gregory of Nyssa, *Vie de Macrina*, SC 178.

⁶⁸Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola* 29, PL 61, 315. See also T. C. Lawler, "Melania the Elder," *Traditio*, 1947, 59.

⁶⁹This is the argument advanced by Vern Bullough, "Transvestites in the Middle Ages," *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (May 1974): 1381-94.

⁷⁰Hippolytus, *Adversus Haereses*, 5, 8, ANF, 1, 44, says that the gnostics responsible for the Gospel of Thomas taught that a woman could not enter the kingdom of heaven without first becoming a man. Conversely, however, one of the Montanist prophetesses had a vision of Christ as a woman. Epiphanius, *Haereses*, 49.1. Some of the psychological explanations for these phenomena are discussed by Eric R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 112.

⁷¹The most famous of the fathers who took this route was Origen. A broader discussion of this problem can be found in Edward Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

⁷²*Ad Eustochium*, 27, PL, 22, 412.

⁷³These tales are included in the hagiographical collections made from the Jacobite (Egyptian) *Synaxarium* and other related material by DeLacy E. O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1937).

⁷⁴*Dialogues*, 4, 13, PL 77.

⁷⁵Citing Paul, *Galatians*, 3:28, Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 132. Paul's dictum was expanded by Peter's companion, Clement of Rome, in his second letter, 12, 72, that when the kingdom of God should come, "the two shall be made one and the outside as the inside and the male with the female." For further material see H. Achelis, *Virgines subintroductae, ein Beitrage zu I. Korinthe VIII* (Leipzig, 1902).

⁷⁶Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola* 44, PL 61, 388.

⁷⁷*Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 201.

⁷⁸*Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, trans., St. W. Shewring (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), p. 10.

⁷⁹Augustine, *Sermo* 282, PL 38, 1285 and *Sermo* 280, PL 38, 1281.

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VIRGINITY AND ITS MEANING FOR WOMEN'S SEXUALITY IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Elizabeth Castelli

The fervor with which large numbers of early Christian women pursued lives of asceticism and renunciation is a curious fact in the history of women in late antiquity. In recent years, several feminist scholars have attempted to explain the attraction of the ascetic life for early Christian women by demonstrating that renunciation of the world paradoxically offered women the possibility of moving outside the constraints of socially and sexually conventional roles, of exercising power, and of experiencing a sense of worth which was often unavailable to them within the traditional setting of marriage.¹ The purpose of this essay is to engage the question of the attraction of asceticism for women from a slightly different perspective, to try to determine the effect of worldly renunciation and celibacy on the lives and sexuality of early Christian women and on the culture which constructed women's limited options in the first place. The first section of the paper deals with the question of method and the problem of sources; the second section treats the idea of virginity as the fathers of the church and other male writers of the period portrayed it. The third section attempts to portray the diversity of women's practice of virginity and to set this experience in the context of the other options available to women at this moment in history; the fourth section seeks to draw conclusions about the meaning of virginity and renunciation for women's sexuality in late antiquity.

Problems of Method And Sources

To ask questions about women's history in any period is to embark on a treacherous and often disappointing search for buried treasure. When the

¹ Elizabeth A. Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity," *Anglican Theological Review* 63 (1981): 240-257; Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980); Ross Kraemer, "The Conversion of Women to Ascetic Forms of Christianity," *Signs* 6 (1980/81): 298-307; Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: De la maîtrise du corps à la privation sensorielle, Ile-IVe siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983); Rosemary Ruether, "Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age," in *Women of Spirit: Female Leaders in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, eds. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New

period of history is remote and evidence has had centuries to be lost, misfiled, unindexed, rewritten, suppressed, the task grows yet more frustrating. And when, finally, one turns to the history of women in Christianity in a remote period, the situation takes on Heracleian contours. In attempting to understand a distant moment in the lives of Christian women, an historian faces not only the silence of misplaced information and absent texts, but the work of orthodoxy over the centuries. Orthodoxy's power derives from its own dogmatism and its claim to absolute truth; the vacillations of orthodox truth over time have produced the approved bibliography and the filters through which information has passed. It is true that certain heterodox texts have survived through historical accident; it is also true that details concerning women's historical experience may sometimes be deduced from the texts that do remain, as, for example, when the actions of a church council or synod against a particular action by women provide evidence that women were acting outside of the prescribed conventions of the church. But this sort of evidence is almost always fragmentary, and women's side of the story is never preserved.

Even evidence concerning the most orthodox women is often absent through neglect or oversight. Jerome's letters to Paula, Marcella, Eustochium and other learned and literate women were collected and preserved while not a single letter of any of these women remains.² The situation is the same with respect to John Chrysostom's correspondence with Olympias³ as well as with other church fathers and the women to whom they wrote.⁴ A poignant example of the accidental nature of historical knowledge

York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 71–98; Anne Yarbrough, "Christianization in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Women," *Church History* 45 (1976): 149–165.

² Jerome, *Epistolae/Lettres*, 8 vols., text established and French trans. Jerome Labourt (Paris: Société d'Édition "Belles Lettres", 1949–1963). To Eustochium, *Epp.* 22, 31; to Marcella, *Epp.* 23–29, 32, 34, 37–38, 40–44; to Paula, *Epp.* 30, 33, 39; to others, *Epp.* 45, 52, 54, 64, 65, 75, 78, 79, 97, 106, 107, 117, 120, 121, 123, 127, 128, 130. *Ep.* 46 in the collection of Jerome's letters bears the title, "Paula and Eustochium to Marcella," though Labourt 2: 100, n. 2, suggests that the letter may well be an exercise in feminine style on the part of Jerome.

³ John Chrysostom, *Epistolae ad Olympiadem/Lettres à Olympias*, 2d ed. aug. with *Vita Olympiadis/La Vie Anonyme d'Olympias*, text established and French trans. Anne-Marie Malingrey. Sources Chrétiennes no. 13 bis (Paris: Cerf, 1968). Hereafter cited as *Ep.* and *Vita Olympiadis*. There is a certain irony, given the fact that none of Olympias' letters remain, that Malingrey says of John's letters, "Il nous reste encore un grand nombre de lettres qui ont le mérite d'être de véritables échanges de pensée et d'amitié," Malingrey, "Introduction," 11. ("A large number of letters remain for us which have the value of being genuine exchanges of thought and friendship.")

⁴ Rousselle, *Porneia*, 231, n. 8 for a summary of the evidence on this point. One exception appears to be the letters of Melania the elder to Evagrius Ponticus, some of which have been preserved, along with his sixty-two letters to her, in Armenian. This preservation seems to have occurred, thanks to the special place Melania held in the Syrian tradition. Cf. Nicole Moine, "Melaniana," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 15 (1980): 64, n. 327.

of even the most exceptional and orthodox women of the early church is the case of Macrina, the sister of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa. Thanks to Gregory's biography of Macrina,⁵ the story of her life is part of the church's history. According to Gregory's narrative, Macrina, at the age of twelve and through her own rhetorical finesse and theological understanding, evaded her parents' attempts to marry her off, and later single-handedly converted her worldly brother Basil to asceticism.⁶ Of course, hagiographical fervor may account for some of Gregory's claims about his sister's life;⁷ nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the entire account of Macrina's influence over Basil's spiritual life is invention. Therefore, it is somewhat shocking to discover that, in all of Basil's writings, which comprise four volumes of Migne's *Patrologi* and includes 366 letters, Macrina is never mentioned once.⁸ How many women lost their places in the written record of the church because no one chose to write their biographies and because the men whose lives they influenced omitted any mention of them? How many exceptional women may have been only mentioned and been otherwise lost without a trace?⁹ How many "ordinary" virgins are absent from the record altogether?

The regrettable state of the historical record duly noted, there nevertheless remain sources which help in the construction of a partial portrait of women's experience of virginity and asceticism in the early centuries of Christianity, and which suggest certain interpretations of that portrait. With a few notable exceptions,¹⁰ the sources for the history of the idea and practice of virginity and asceticism among women are literary sources. One of the earliest sources is probably the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, a collection of narratives which provides evidence for the attraction of Christian asceticism for women in the second and third centuries.¹¹ Treatises and

⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae/Vie de Sainte Macrine*, text established and French trans. Pierre Maraval. Sources Chrétiennes no. 178 (Paris: Cerf, 1971). Hereafter cited as *Vita Macrinae*.

⁶ Ibid., 5, 6ff.

⁷ Ibid., cf. Maraval's introduction, 23–29, 92 on the text as a philosophical, *theios anēr*-type work.

⁸ J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series graeco-latina* (= PG), pp. 29–32; cf. Maraval's introduction, 43.

⁹ Cf. Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, 2 vols. Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature no. 6:1–2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1904), 2: 219, n. 78: "The other holy women mentioned [in *Historia Lausiaca* 41, on *gynaikes andreiai*: Veneria, Theodora, Hosia, Idolia, Basianna, Photina, and Sabiniana (deaconness and aunt of John Chrysostom)] are not otherwise known to history." Butler is mistaken with respect to Sabiniana, who is mentioned in John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 6, 1d (Malingrey, 130, l. 1), though his point remains well-taken.

¹⁰ These exceptions are papyrus documents which lend credence to the fact that literary sources do not tell the whole story of women's experience of the ascetic life. The documents are BGU 13897, P. Oxy. 1774 and 3203; cf. A. M. Emmett, "Female Ascetics in the Greek Papyri," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32 (1982).

¹¹ Wilhelm Schneemelcher and Edgar Hennecke, eds. *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2

homilies on virginity and renunciation had their origins in the third century in Africa and seem to have become a favorite of writers in the fourth century and afterwards.¹² The lives of certain exceptional women remain, notably Macrina, Syncletica, Olympias, and Melania the Younger.¹³ As noted above, there is a one-sided epistolary tradition involving virgins and ascetic women, women who received the carefully preserved letters of such important church fathers as Jerome, Paulinus of Nola, John Chrysostom, and Basil.¹⁴ The monastic movement in the east, a particular manifestation of the ascetic ideal, produced two anecdotal works which include information on women's experience of asceticism, Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* and the anonymous *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*.¹⁵ Finally, the monastic desert also preserved a handful of sayings attributed to the holy women Theodora, Sara, and Syncletica in the collection *Apophthegmata Patrum*.¹⁶

voIs. English translation edited by R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966); Kraemer, 298–307; Davies, *passim*. There are references to female virginity in the Apostolic Fathers: Clement of Rome, *Epistola 1 ad Corinthios* 38, 2; Ignatius *Epistola ad Smyrnaeos* 13, 1; Ignatius, *Epistola ad Polycarpum* 5, 2; Polycarp, *Epistola ad Philipenses* 5, 3.

¹² Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* (PL 2, 887–914), dated between 200 and 206; Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum* (PL 4, 439–464), dated to the middle of the third century, c. 249. The most important treatises on virginity are the following: Ambrose, *De Virginibus* (PL 16, 187–232); Athanasius, *De Virginitate Sive Ascesi* (PG 28, 251–282); Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate* (PL 40, 395–428); Basil of Ancyra, *De Vera Virginitate* (PL 30, 669–810); Pseudo-Clement, *Epistolae 1–2 ad Virgines* (PG 1, 379–452); Eusebius of Emesa, *Homiliae VI et VII*, in E. M. Buytaert, ed. *Eusèbe d'Emèse: Discours conservés en Latin*, Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense no. 26 (Louvain: Université catholique et collèges théologiques O. P. et S. J. de Louvain, 1953); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate/Traité de la Virginité*, text established and French trans. Michel Aubineau. Sources Chrétiennes no. 119 (Paris: Cerf, 1966) [hereafter cited as *De Virginitate*]; Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* (PL 23, 211–388); Jerome Ep. 22; John Chrysostom, *De Virginitate/La Virginité*, text established by Herbert Musurillo, French trans. Bernard Grillet. Sources Chrétiennes no. 125 (Paris: Cerf, 1966) [hereafter cited as *De Virginitate*]; Methodius, *Symposium Decem Virginum/Le Banquet*, text established and French trans. Victor-Henry Debidour. Sources Chrétiennes no. 95 (Paris: Cerf, 1963). For a summary of the development of the arguments of fourth-century treatises, cf. Thomas Camelot, "Les traités *De Virginitate* au IV^e siècle," *Etudes Carmelitaines* 13 (1952): 273–292. Also, on general content of treatises, cf. Francois Bourassa, "Excellence de la virginité: Arguments patristiques," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 5 (1953): 29–41.

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae*; Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita et Gesta Sanctae Beataeque Magistrae Syncleticae* (PG 28, 1487–1558), hereafter cited as *Vita Syncleticae*; *Vita Olympiadis*; *Vita Melaniae/Vie de Sainte Melanie*, text established and French trans. Denys Gorce. Sources Chrétiennes no. 90 (Paris: Cerf, 1962), hereafter cited as *Vita Melaniae*.

¹⁴ For Jerome and Chrysostom, see notes 2 and 3 above. Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae/Lettres*, 3 vols. Text established and French trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition "Belles Lettres, 1957–1966). Paulinus of Nola, *Epistolae/Letters*, 2 vols., trans. P. G. Walsh. Ancient Christian Writers nos. 35, 36 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1967).

¹⁵ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* (PG 34, 995–1262); critical ed., Butler, vol. 2; *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, text established and French trans. A.-J. Festugière. Subsidia Hagiographica no. 53. Brussels: Société de Bollandistes, 1971.

¹⁶ *Apophthegmata Patrum* (PG 65, 71–440); sayings of Theodora (PG 65, 201A–204B);

The question then is how to use these texts to understand and interpret the experience and meaning of asceticism and virginity for women, and for the culture as a whole. Of course, as Butler, Rousseau, and Moine have ably shown, to act under the assumption that these texts portray history as twentieth-century scholars understand that concept would be naive.¹⁷ Narratives and discourses full of miraculous healings, demons (real or imagined), hagiographical fervor, and a desire to recreate—through example and dogmatic definition both—an ideal of Christian perfection and the angelic life, are not historically accurate in the modern sense, nor do they mean to be. Rather, they are orthodox attempts to frame and order experience and doctrine into a single, monolithic image of Christian existence. In a Christocentric, ecclesiocentric world order, each act and its motivation must be adapted to the dominant set of categories or be lost or called heretical. Thus, true virgins remained chaste for love of Christ, in a desire to perfect themselves for an angelic future, for an ideal of humility and self-effacement. They did not do so to escape disagreeable home lives, to avoid painful sex, or to have access to a different set of possibilities than the limited ones offered them by a constricting social order. The texts offer a glimpse of women's experience of virginity, and a clear and well-developed picture of the frame which envelops the image, the frame comprised of the categories which constructed and attempted to appropriate and subsume the experience. The question becomes this: where did women's experience of virginity and asceticism coincide with the orthodox line and where did it rupture that line? Did women use the Christian categories to try to break the severely limiting conventions of the social order? Was such a rupture possible, given the shared notion of patriarchal dualism which created the material and ideological realities of both late antiquity in general and early Christianity in particular? And the final, specific question which motivates this entire inquiry: what did the movement toward virginity and ascetic renunciation mean for women's sexuality?

The Roots Of Asceticism And The Idea Of Virginity

The roots of asceticism lie at the very heart of the Christian tradition, in Jesus' more radical exhortations on the requirements of discipleship and in Paul's advice to early Christian communities to follow his example of the celibate life so as not to detract from preparation for the coming kingdom of God.¹⁸ How did these early roots bring forth such a flourishing of radical

sayings of Sara (PG 65, 419B–422A); sayings of Syncletica (PG 65, 421A–428A). English translation in Owen Chadwick, ed., *Western Asceticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 33–189.

¹⁷ Butler, 1: 178–196; Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Ages of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 11–18; Moine, "Melaniana," passim.

¹⁸ Mk 8:34–9:1 (par.); Lk 9:1–6 (par.); etc; 1 Cor 7.

renunciation? How did the eschatologically motivated words of Paul and the historical exigencies of the early centuries of the common era combine to produce an ascetic ideology and practice virtually unheard of in antiquity and certainly never before practiced by such large numbers of people representing such a spectrum of society?¹⁹

One convincing hypothesis suggests that the ascetic ideal flourished as a response to the end of the persecutions of Christians in the early fourth century. Brock, for example, argues this way:

Movements can often best be understood in terms of reactions against some aspect of contemporary society, and, just as the idealism of modern aspirants to an "alternative society" has largely been motivated by disgust at the materialistic affluence of the post-war society they live in, so that of their fourth century counterparts was, to some extent at least, the product of a reaction against the degradation of the quality of Christian life after the last persecutions had ceased. As we shall see, the ascetic is in many ways the successor of the martyr. To the early church the martyr represented an ideal, and after the end of the persecutions, when this ideal was no longer attainable, it was replaced by that of the ascetic, whose whole life was in fact often regarded in terms of a martyrdom, and it is very significant that much of the terminology used in connection with ascetics, such as "contest," "athlete" and so on, was previously applied to martyrs. In the case of the ascetic the human persecutor has simply been replaced by a spiritual, that is to say, demonic, counterpart. Moreover, if one sees the ascetics of the fourth century onwards as heirs to the martyrs, it helps one realise why they regarded their life as simply carrying on the norm of Christian life in pre-Constantinian times, when to be a Christian was usually a matter of real seriousness.²⁰

¹⁹ Judaism offers two examples of communities self-consciously pursuing lives of ascetic renunciation and withdrawal, the Essenes and the Therapeutae and Therapeutrides. The ancient references to the Essenes may be found in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XIII, 5, 9; XV, 10, 4-5; XVIII, 1, 2-6; *Jewish Wars* II, 8, 2-14; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 5, 17; Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 12-13. The sole witness for the community of the Therapeutae/Therapeutrides is Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*. The Greek tradition is without a parallel notion of asceticism; cf. Anatole Moulard, *Saint Jean Chrysostom: Le défenseur du mariage et l'apôtre de la virginité* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1923), p. 171ff, which cites certain exceptions: temporary asceticism among athletes, but without moral connotations, and some ritual virginity which was also always only temporary. The Roman tradition offers the example of the vestal virgins, whose virginity was tied to the well-being of the state. That the virtues and dangers of virginity as a permanent condition were being discussed in the first century of the common era is attested by Soranus, *Gynaeciorum Libri* IV, ed. Ioannes Ilberg. *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* vol. 4 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), paragraphs 30-32 (pp. 20-22). Finally, the philosophical tradition, particularly Stoicism, was exploring the question of the relationship between marriage and sexuality on the one hand and the pursuit of the good on the other; see below for the discussion of the Stoic influence on certain Christian notions related to virginity and asceticism.

²⁰ S. P. Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," *Numen* 20 (1973): 2. Compare a similar argument put forward by David Knowles, *Christian Monasticism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), 12.

Marcel Viller has traced the connection between martyrdom and asceticism from its origins in Christianity, showing how the ideology of asceticism made it possible for the faithful to follow Christ and achieve perfection even during the persecutions without becoming martyrs. He also demonstrates how asceticism was elevated during the years following the persecutions to a position more honored even than martyrdom itself, and how *new* notions such as that of the nonbloody martyrdom of renunciation arose after the fourth century to accommodate the new historical situation.²¹

Of course, one can probably not account completely for the rise of the ascetic ideal by invoking the historical move from cultural marginality to hegemony which the Christianizing of the empire represented. Nevertheless, it seems quite likely that the shift played an important role in the evolution and growth of asceticism in the fourth century. Certainly, the developing ideology of virginity and asceticism would sustain such an argument, since the special status of virgins, already asserted in the first centuries of Christianity,²² becomes a commonplace in the fourth-century literature.²³

This unfolding ideology of virginity is highly complex, intertwining

²¹ Marcel Viller, "Le Martyre et l'ascèse," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 6 (1925): 105–142. One example he offers comes from Anthony Melissae, *Sententiae sive Loci Communes* II, 13 (PG 136, 1113D–1116A): "The martyrs often attained perfection in a single moment of battle; the life of monks, a daily battle for Christ, is also martyrdom, it is not only a battle against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers and the masters of the world of darkness, against the spirits of evil. We sustain the struggle until the last breath . . ." Cf. Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncleticae* 8 (PG 28, 1489D–1492A) where Syncletica is compared with Thecla, and the author asserts that Syncletica's sufferings were greater than those of her martyred counterpart.

²² Cf., for example, Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum* 3: "They [virgins] are the flower of the tree that is the Church, the beauty and adornment of spiritual grace, the image of God reflecting the holiness of the Lord, the most illustrious part of Christ's flock." Hippolytus includes ascetics in the seven divine orders (*Fragmenta in Proverbia*, PL 10, 627) and Origen places virgins third in his hierarchy, following only the apostles and the martyrs (*Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos* 9, 1, PG 14, 1205). For a complete discussion of Origen's position on virginity, cf. Henri Crouzel, *Virginité et mariage selon Origène*, Museum Lessianum section théologique no. 58 (Paris/Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963). Clement of Alexandria calls ascetics "even more elect than the elect" (*Quis dives salvetur* 36).

²³ Cf. Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 7, 3, 157–158, where virgins are called the legitimate brides of Christ, while all other women in the church are concubines, young girls, or daughters; virgins are unique, elect, most honored in Jesus' eyes. Another familiar motif in the literature of the fourth century is excessively high praise for the exceptional virgins: Macrina is called "the common object of great boasting in our family" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 22, 28); Eustochium is called the first among the nobles of Rome (Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 15); Melania the elder was "the true pride of Christians of our time" (Jerome, *Ep.* 39, 5); Melania the younger was "the first among the senatorial class of Romans" (*Vita Melaniae* 1), and Olympias' virtues are the object of especially abundant rhetoric (*Vita Olympiadis* 13ff).

theological arguments, current philosophical ideas, and a collection of contemporary rhetorical themes to produce a tightly woven image of virginity as the ideal of Christian life. The development of such an ideal was probably an inviting challenge for the writers of the early church, since they were always treading dangerous (which is to say, potentially gnostic) ground with the body-spirit dualism which undergirded the arguments for virginity. They avoided it by returning to the idea first expressed by Paul, that marriage was good but virginity was better; this notion became both the cornerstone for patristic discourses on the preferability of virginity *and* the tool used against those who were thought to pursue their asceticism too rigorously, such as the encratites attacked by John Chrysostom and the Eustathians condemned at the Council of Gangra.²⁴ At the same time, the notion of sexuality was extremely narrowly defined, which is to say, heterosexual intercourse within marriage with the goal of producing children. Justin asserts, "Formerly we took pleasure in debauchery, but now we embrace chastity alone. . . . If we do marry, it is absolutely only in order to raise our children, and if we renounce marriage, we keep perfect continence." Clement of Alexandria discusses the goals of marriage, saying that the desire should be to act according to nature, which is to say, to produce children. Meanwhile, Jerome praises marriage because it produces virgins, as does Eusebius of Emesa.²⁵

While the church fathers may have defended marriage, they were also quite zealous in conjuring images of its limitations in order to create a sharper contrast between it and the ideal of virginity. The theme of the pains of marriage is common in the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition, and it became a useful trope in the construction of the notion of virginity in the fourth-century literature. John Chrysostom found in the comparison a rich theme on which to expound in his *De Virginitate*; he devotes twenty-two chapters to the pains of marriage and how the virgin escapes them. Jealousy is an

²⁴ Cor 7:38. Cf. John Chrysostom, *De Virginitate* 1–11, 25–50; cf. also John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Matthaeum* 86, 4 (PG 58, 768) on wives leaving their husbands to practice asceticism (cited by Moulard, 132–133). Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncreticae* 77–78 (PG 28, 1531C–1534A); Camelot, "Les traités," 279; Moulard, 87–165; and David Amand de Mendieta, "La virginité chez Eusèbe d'Emèse et l'ascétisme familial dans la première moitié du IV^e siècle," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 50 (1955): 787–788; Karl Josef Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, trans. Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1907–1913), I: 1036–1039. The Council of Gangra was held c. 340 CE.

²⁵ Justin, *Apologia* I, 14; 19 (PG 6, 347A–350A; 355B–358B); Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* II, 10; cf. Musonius Rufus, 12–13. On Clement's extensive borrowing from Musonius, see Cora E. Lutz, "Musonius Rufus, The Roman Socrates," *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947): 20, n. 83. On the Stoic influence on Christian writers in general concerning this point, cf. Michel Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des pères de l'Eglise de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie*, *Patristica Sorbonensia* no. 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 259–260. Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 20; Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 6, 6; 6, 17; cf. Amand de Mendieta, 788.

inevitable side-effect, but by no means the only disadvantage of marriage. A wealthy marriage is much more painful than a poor one: if the woman brings more property to the union, the husband must yield to the wife's authority; if the man is richer, he becomes the wife's master and she must do and suffer everything as though she were his slave. The married woman's life is full of chagrin and worry: she must concern herself with family members and their affairs, their bad luck, their loss of money, their illnesses, their accidents, their deaths. She must worry about her spouse's character, then over her own fertility—whether she might be sterile or, conversely, might have too many children. If she does conceive quickly, she must worry about miscarriage, about the potential death of the baby or her own death at delivery; the pains of childbirth are so torturous that they alone are capable of overshadowing all the joys of marriage. Then she dreads the possibility that her child might be malformed rather than healthy, or that she might have a girl rather than a boy. All this, without yet any mention of the problems of the child's upbringing! The fear of the death of one of the spouses and the anguish of separation round out John's rendering of the pains of marriage, a harsh and poignant account which will become the backdrop for the portrait of the ideal, virginity.²⁶

John Chrysostom's description of the pains of marriage is only one of many. Gregory of Nyssa echoes many of John's observations, calling marriage the chief evil, leading to quarrels and suspicion; he invokes the authority of ancient narrators, and claims that every story begins with marriage and ends in tragedy. Finally, he compares marriage with disease.²⁷ Jerome assumes that the arguments against marriage are well-known, so that he need not bother to reiterate them, but directs Eustochium to the treatises by Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose on the subject.²⁸ Eusebius of Emesa writes about the pains of marriage as well, making many of the same arguments as John and Gregory. He concludes his poignant description with this dramatic summary:

Such are the so-called advantages which seduce so many young girls [into marriage]. They constitute a warning to wise and sensible girls. Look at these modest and prudent brides: one buries her husband while another delivers herself over to funereal lamentations, and another is crushed with grief. This one yielded to injustice, that one died before her marriage, another succumbs right in the middle of the wedding itself. Another cries for her groom, another for her children, and another is desolate at the cruelty of her husband. Here is one who cries for herself, crazed by jealousy, who increases her

²⁶ John Chrysostom, *De Virginitate* 51–72. Cf. Moulard, 201–207 for a summary of Chrysostom's thought on the subject.

²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 3, esp. 3, 10.

²⁸ Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 2; 22, 22. Note that, elsewhere, Jerome preserves a fragment of Theophrastus' *De Nuptiis*, against marriage (*Adversus Jovinianum* 1, 47; PL 23, 276–277).

investigations to discover the cause of her husband's enslavement [by another woman (?)]. Finally, here is a mother, burdened with children: to remove illnesses and to obtain medicines, she passes her nights wide awake; she sweats, she suffers, she is afraid, she torments herself. She awaits death as if it would bring to her a greater kindness than life.²⁹

The virgin, by contrast, suffers with joy for Christ and escapes the many difficulties of married life.³⁰ The virgin, says John Chrysostom, "is not obliged to involve herself tiresomely in the affairs of her spouse and she does not fear being abused." Even the harshest sufferings of the virgin cannot compare to the sufferings of the married woman. "Tell me," says Chrysostom,

during her entire life, does the virgin endure what the married woman endures almost every year, the one who is split apart by labor pains and wailings? For the tyranny of this suffering is such that, when divine scripture wants to represent captivity, famine, plague, and intolerable evils, it calls all these the pains of childbirth? And God imposed it on women as a chastisement and an affliction, not childbirth, I say, but childbirth with sufferings and anguish. "For in struggle," he says, "you will bear children." But the virgin stands higher than this anguish or this suffering. For the one who annulled the curse of the law, annulled this curse along with it.³¹

Cyprian, earlier, used the same Genesis text (3:16) to show the liberating aspect of virginity. "You virgins are free from this sentence," he wrote;

you do not fear the sorrows of women and their groans; you have no fear about the birth of children, nor is your husband your master, but your Master and Head is Christ in the likeness of and in the place of a man; your lot and condition are the same (as that of men).³²

This theme of virginity as liberation was common in the treatises on virginity and occurs frequently in the traditions concerning particular holy women.³³ Jerome, for example, attributes this statement to Melania the Elder, upon the death of her husband and two children: "'Lord, I will serve you more easily, since you have relieved me of such burdens.'"³⁴

²⁹ Sufferings in childbirth: *Homiliae* 6, 4; 7, 15. Jealousy: *Homiliae* 6, 4; 7, 15. Husband's reproaches and recriminations over children: *Homiliae* 6, 4; 7, 16. Worries and fears inspired by husband: *Homiliae* 6, 14; 7, 15. Concern over children: *Homiliae* 6, 14; 7, 16. For a summary, cf. Amand de Mendieta, 789–794. The quotation is from *Homilia* 7, 17.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, *De Virginitate* 64.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 59, 65.

³² Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum* 22; translation from Michael Andrew Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Hermeneutik no. 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 59.

³³ Camelot, "Les traités," 281; Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 3, 8; Eusebius of Emesa, *Homiliae* 6, 5; 6, 16; 7, 18 (cf. Amand de Mendieta, 794–797).

³⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 39, 5.

The notion of virginity as liberation from the exigencies of earthly marriage leads into the theme of celestial marriage with Christ, as Cyprian's text quoted above suggests. The language of Christ as bridegroom is present throughout all of the literature concerning virgins, along with the assertion that a vow of virginity is an irrevocable marriage contract with Jesus. Gregory of Nyssa brings together many of the images associated with this brand of "spiritual marriage" in his *De Virginitate*. There he speaks of the marriage of the virgin spirit with God as the authentic archetype for all marriage, a marriage in which God is preferred over all others. He uses eros-language throughout the text, and it would appear that he understands virginity to be a spiritual version of sexual love. To yield to passion is to commit adultery against the celestial bridegroom; virginity demands the mistrust of all flesh. Gregory carries even the notion of fertility into the spiritual realm: virgins possess a special spiritual fecundity and, as imitators of Mary, become themselves mothers of Christ. There is, in addition, a special and practical advantage to this spiritual fertility: it is the one way in which women can conceive without being dependent upon the will of men.³⁵

Gregory was the only writer to systematize this collection of ideas in this way, but the notion of the virgin as the bride of Christ is present from the earliest patristic writings.³⁶ Tertullian uses the idea to undergird his argument that virgins ought to be veiled; since a modest wife never goes out without a veil, virgins, who are brides of Christ, should all the more so wear veils.³⁷ The rite of *velatio* (veiling) later committed the virgin to an irrevocable and mystical marriage with Christ³⁸ and violation of the tie was considered sacrilegious adultery.³⁹ In the fourth century, imperial law reinforced

³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate*, Aubineau introduction, 193–204; 2, 2; 3, 3, 8; 4, 7; 14, 3; 15, 1; 16, 1–2; 20, 1 and 3–4; 23, 6.

³⁶ On the Virgin as bride, see, for example, Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate* 56 (PL 40, 428); Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 6, 5, 145; 7, 3, 157; Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 6, 16; 6, 18. On Jesus as bridegroom: Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncleticae* 92 (PG 28, 1543C–1546A); Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 3, 8; 15, 1; 16, 1; 20, 4; Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 2; *Acts of Thomas* 4ff, 6–7, 124.

³⁷ Tertullian, *De Virginitate* 16 (PL 2, 911).

³⁸ Henri Leclercq, "Vierge, Virginité," *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, edited by Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1953), II, cols. 3102ff. For a complete discussion of the rites associated with the consecration of virgins, cf. René Metz, *La consécration des vierges dans l'Eglise romaine; Etude d'histoire de la liturgie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954). For virginity as an eternal, indissoluble marriage with Christ, cf. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate* 8; 11 (PL 40, 400, 401); Ambrose, *De Virginitate* 1, 5, 22 (PL 16, 195); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Exhortatio ad virgines* 1–6 (PG 37, 637ff).

³⁹ This theme is very common in literature on "fallen" virgins; cf. Basil, *Ep.* 46, 2; Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 13; *Vita Olympiadis* 17; John Chrysostom, *De non Iterando Coniugio* 3; Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 7, 26; Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginitatis* 20. Cf. also Aubineau, "Les écrits de Saint Athanase," 155, and canon 19 of the Council of Ancyra (314 CE): "All those who have consecrated their virginity and who have violated their promise ought to be considered bigamists" (Hefele, I: 321f).

this ecclesiastical proscription.⁴⁰ The virgin-bride should do the will of the bridegroom, repress her senses through asceticism in order to gain access to the heavenly bridal chamber, and guard her body, spirit and soul for Christ, her spouse.⁴¹

The erotic language which surrounds descriptions of a virgin's encounter with Christ is rather striking. The metaphor of marriage leads to a kind of spiritualized sexuality:

Ever let the privacy of your chamber guard you; ever let the Bridegroom sport with you within. Do you pray? You speak to the Bridegroom. Do you read? He speaks to you. When sleep overtakes you He will come behind and put His hand through the hole of the door, and your heart shall be moved for Him; and you will awake and rise up and say: "I am sick with love." Then he will reply: "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."⁴²

This motif of eroticism and erotic substitution is present in the earliest narratives concerning women's asceticism, the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and it continues as an important theme, especially in the lives of holy women.⁴³ Macrina, on her deathbed, is filled with "that divine and pure love (*erōs*) of the invisible bridegroom," and she hastens toward her lover. Olympias imitates the lovers (*erastes*) of Christ, burning with ardor, and John Chrysostom's lessons are said to light the fire of divine love (*theios erōs*) in the virgins of Olympias' convent. It is recounted that Melania the younger was in love with Christ from her youth and wounded by divine love.⁴⁴

Accompanying this erotic language, as with Gregory's systematized notion of spiritual marriage, is the idea of spiritual fecundity. The image is an old one, found in Philo's description of the Therapeutrides, then in early writers on the fertility of the church and finally, fertility becomes a characteristic of virginity itself.⁴⁵ Methodius, for example, speaks of the virgins who receive the pure and fertile seed of doctrine as though they were

⁴⁰ Leclercq, "Vierge," 3102ff; *Codex Theodosianus* IX, 25.

⁴¹ Athanasius, *De Virginitate* 2 (PG 28, 253B–D), 24 (PG 28, 279C–282A); Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncreticae* 9 (PG 28, 1491A–B); Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 25; John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 8, 3; *Vita Melaniae* 42. Conversely, false virgins do not deserve entry into the bridal chamber: John Cassian, *Conference* 22, 6. Also Basil, *Ep.* 46, 3; Cassian, *Conference* 22, 6; Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 5, 4, 116; *Vita Melaniae* 42; Athenagoras, *Legatio* 33. On the virgin's body as an empty temple to be filled by the spirit, cf. Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 23; Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 6, 18 and elsewhere (cf. Amand de Mendieta, 782–783); Crouzel, 46–49.

⁴² Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 25; cf. also Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 17, which acknowledges the difficulty of the human spirit renouncing love, but carnal love ought to be replaced by another desire: the virgin ought to be able to say, "During the night, in my bed, I sought him who loved my spirit."

⁴³ Kraemer, 303; *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 18–19; *Acts of Thomas* 116, 117; *Acts of Philip* 120; *Acts of Thomas* 4ff, 6–7, 124.

⁴⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 22; *Vita Olympiadis* 5; 6; 8; *Vita Melaniae* 1; 32.

⁴⁵ Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa* 68: "Eager to have her [wisdom] for their life mate they

brides.⁴⁶ Others describe the engendering of the son of God in the spirit of the virgin, thus making it possible for her to imitate Mary.⁴⁷

The underside of these metaphors of spiritualized marriage and sexuality is a persistent suspicion of the flesh and its passions, a suspicion not solely Christian in origin, but found throughout the Stoic philosophical tradition which influenced much Christian thinking about virginity.⁴⁸ The Stoic system is based on the precept that passion and reason are natural adversaries and that the goal of human life should be to become *logikos* and *apathe*s, reasonable/logical and without passions; to do so is to live life in accordance with nature.⁴⁹ Clement of Alexandria, one of the church fathers particularly influenced by Stoicism, based his notion of sin on this Stoic idea; for Clement, sin was defined as the passion of the spirit against nature.⁵⁰ The tyranny of sensation and the passions as an obstacle in the pathway to the Christian ideal is a common notion in early Christian writings, especially from the third century on, and especially in the writings on virginity and continence. Evagrius Ponticus describes a chain whose links are sensation leading to desire which leads to pleasure; the goal of Christian perfection must be to wipe out sensation in order to break the menacing chain.⁵¹ Saint Syncretica, in her attempts to achieve perfection, closed off her senses to everything except the Bridegroom.⁵² Eusebius of Emesa preaches:

Among the virgins whom the ardent desire of God has touched, lust is dead, passion killed. Nailed to the cross with its vices and desires, the body is like a stranger to them; it does not feel what you feel, it is no longer of the same nature as your body. The resolution of virginity has transported it to heaven; the human nature of the virgin is not long on earth with you.⁵³

have spurned the pleasures of the body and desire no mortal offspring but those immortal children which only the soul that is dear to God can bring to the birth unaided because the Father has sown in her spiritual rays enabling her to behold the verities of wisdom." Cf. also *Legum allegoriae* 3, 180–181 and *De cherubim* 42, 43, 48f for similar imagery. Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum* 3; Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 3, 8, 70–71; 75 (church as the receptacle of the fertile seed of doctrine); Discourse 8, 11, 197 (the virile/potent logos). Cf. also Crouzel, 15–44, on Origen's development of the notion of the mystical union of the church and Christ. Also cf. Ambrose, *De Virginibus* 1, 5, 31 (PL 16, 197); Augustine *De Sancta Virginitate* 2, 5, 6, 12 (PL 40, 397; 401).

⁴⁶ Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 3, 7, 74.

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *De Virginibus* 1, 3, 6, 11, 30 (PL 16, 191f, 197); Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate* 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, (PL 40, 397). For general discussion, cf. Bourassa, 30–33.

⁴⁸ Cf. Spanneut, *passim*. See also Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1948–1949), I: 400–461 on the relationship between Stoicism and Christianity until the Pelagian controversy, and 433–436 on asceticism in particular.

⁴⁹ Spanneut, 232–235, 241–242; Pohlenz, I: 116–118.

⁵⁰ Spanneut, *passim*; Lutz, 20, n. 83; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* I, 6, 1.

⁵¹ Evagrius Ponticus, *Capita Practica ad Anatolium* (PG 40, 1243–1246C).

⁵² Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncreticae* 9 (PG 28, 1492).

⁵³ Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 7, 13 (Amand de Mendieta, 784).

In the spiritual marriage described by Gregory of Nyssa, to yield to the passions is to commit adultery against God and the very nature of spiritual marriage is the distrust of everything carnal.⁵⁴

The philosophical ideal which Gregory outlines in his biography of Macrina includes liberation from the passions (*apatheia*) as one of its characteristics. At the tragic and unexpected death of her brother Naucratus, Macrina uses reason (*logismos*) against passion (*pathos*) to overcome her grief, and thereby becomes her mother's instructor in the Stoic virtue, courage (*andreia*).⁵⁵ One characteristic of the ascetic community created by Macrina at Annisa was the absence of passion; having liberated themselves from passion, these virgins were above human nature. Macrina, just before her death, so achieved the goal of *apatheia* that she became an angel in human form, with no affinity with the flesh.⁵⁶ This *apatheia*, born out of devotion to Christ, should be so complete that the virgin lives an everyday death.⁵⁷

In Gregory's biography of Macrina, the equation of pathos and femininity is made explicit.⁵⁸ The connection may be Stoic in origin, as Seneca opens his dialogue, *De Constantia Sapientis*, with a comparison of Stoics and other philosophers, using the metaphor of sexual difference: "*Stoici, virilem ingressi viam*" ("Stoics, advancing along the manly way").⁵⁹ The idea is common in early Christian writers, and it provides an important metaphor for Philo as well.⁶⁰ Porphyry's well-known letter to Marcella provides an example from contemporaneous non-Christian writings of the connection between femininity and corruptible bodiliness:

Therefore, . . . do not preoccupy yourself with the body, do not see yourself as a woman, since I no longer hold you as such. Flee in the spirit everything feminine (*thēlunomenon*) as if you had a male body which enveloped [you]. For from a virgin spirit and a virgin mind the most blessed things are born; from the intact is born the incorruptible; but that to which the body gives birth, all the gods called polluted.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 16, 1–2; 20, 3.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 10; on the virtue of *andreia* among women specifically, see below. John Chrysostom advised Olympias that she conquer her passions and sufferings through reason, *Ep.* 3, 1b.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 11; 22; For *apatheia* as a goal beyond mastery of the passions, cf. John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 8, 5a–b. For this goal as part of the model for the Stoic sage, cf. Seneca, *De Constantia Sapientis* III.

⁵⁷ *Vita Melaniae* 12. Cf. also Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 17, which advises Eustochium to seek out for company only those virgins who are thin and pale through repression of their bodily passions, those who say lovingly, "I want to die [dissolve myself] to be with Christ."

⁵⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 10. Origen makes the same equation; cf. Crouzel, 135–139.

⁵⁹ Seneca, *De Constantia Sapientis* I, 1.

⁶⁰ Richard A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female*, Arbeit zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums no. 3. (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

⁶¹ Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam/Lettre à Marcella*, text established and French trans.

Many of the ascetic women whose stories remain are considered laudable because they escaped the bonds of their feminine nature: thus, Olympias and Melania are both called *hē anthrōpos* (the [feminine article] hu/man [generic, masculine noun]). Gregory says of Macrina at the beginning of her story, "A woman is the starting-point of the narrative, if indeed a woman; for I do not know if it is proper to name her who is above nature out of [the terms] of nature." Likewise, John Chrysostom is said to have responded to a question concerning Olympias by saying, "Don't say 'woman' but 'what a man!' because this is a man, despite her physical appearance."⁶² In addition, in one of the few sayings attributed to women in the monastic tradition, Mother Sara says of herself, "I am a woman by nature but not in reason."⁶³ Athanasius advises virgins to abandon feminine mentality, because women who please God will be elevated to male ranks.⁶⁴

The idea of virgins transcending or rising above nature is a point at which Stoicism and Christianity part ways, though in the case of the Christian ideal, nature is apparently not meant in the sense of the nature-reason equation but rather as that which has to do with the material, female realm. John Chrysostom understands virginity as a struggle against the tyranny of nature as does Melania the Younger's biographer. Eusebius of Emesa portrays the Christian ideal as that which negates or transcends nature and calls fallen virgins those who "fall to the level of nature."⁶⁵ Jerome is alone among the church fathers in seeing virginity itself as the natural state, though here he seems to be using the term "natural" as part of the nature-reason equation, since he makes the point in the context of arguing that sexuality itself is the product of the fall.⁶⁶

The notion of ascetic women evading their female nature arises in an interesting narrative motif which appears early in the tradition and remains a controversial sign of female renunciation and spirituality well into the ninth century—the motif of women cutting their hair or disguising themselves as monks.⁶⁷ Thecla, who remains the model of virginity for generations of

Edouard des Places (Paris: Société d'Édition "Belles Lettres," 1982), 33. For the same use of *thēlunomenon*, cf. Porphyry, *De Abstemio* IV, 20 in Porphyry, *Opuscula Selecta*, ed. Augustus Nauck (Leipzig: Teubner, 1886) 262, 1. 25. Cf. Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 8, 13, 205: "... make your soul male ..."

⁶² *Vita Olympiadis* 3; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 9 (on Melania); Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 1; Palladius, *Dialogus de vita S. Ioannis Chrysostomi* (PG 47, 56).

⁶³ PG 65, 420D. The same theme occurs also in Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 20, 4 and *Vita Melaniae* 39.

⁶⁴ Athanasius, *De Virginitate* 10–12 (PG 28, 261C–266B).

⁶⁵ John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 8, 6d; *Vita Melaniae* 12, Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 7, 6; 7, 8 (cf. Amand de Mendieta, 780–781); Amand de Mendieta, 819.

⁶⁶ Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 19. Cf. John Chrysostom, *De Virginitate* 14 and elsewhere; cf. Grillet, 142, n. 3; Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 4; Crouzel, 26. By contrast, note that Augustine claimed that Adam and Eve had physical needs even in paradise: *De Nuptiis* I, 9, 24 (PL 44, 418–419; 427–428).

⁶⁷ Evelyn Patlagean, "L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la

ascetic women,⁶⁸ both cuts her hair and wears men's clothing in the Acts of Paul and Thecla while, in other Apocryphal Acts, Mygdonia cuts her hair and Charitine wears men's clothing.⁶⁹ Syncletica is said to cut her hair as a sign of her renunciation of the world.⁷⁰ Transvestism among virgins is said to be accompanied by loss of female bodily characteristics, and to be followed by the negation of sexuality altogether:

But there is more: the fundamental negation of femininity, where the physical spoiling is a manifestation of the spirit's evasion of its native condition. Our texts often express themselves in this regard in images which are quite explicit. . . . "Her breasts were not like the breasts of other women," we read about Hilaria. "On account of her ascetic practices they were withered; and she was not subjected to the illness of women, for God had ordained it that way": the symbol remains clear under physiological evidence. The withered breasts, "like dead leaves," reveal, when Anastasia or Hilaria was shrouded, at once their femininity and the accomplishment of their asceticism. The body of Apollonaria became "like the exterior of a turtle," but Christ wanted to render her "the honor of the crown of the holy fathers," and to show her "virile virtue" [*andreia*].

The transvestite woman passes for a eunuch.⁷¹

Despite their function as a sign of renunciation and holiness,⁷² transvestism and hair cutting were not always lauded as a practice demonstrating piety. Jerome warns Eustochium against women who dress as men and the Council of Gangra in the mid-fourth century condemned ascetic women who, as a part of their rigorous renunciation, cut their hair and wore men's clothing.⁷³

One last theme pertaining to the cultural construction of virginity remains to be examined: the notion of courage borrowed from Stoicism,

saint te f minine   Byzance," *Studi Medievali*, 3d. ser., 17 (1976): 597-623; J. Anson, "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: Origin and Development of a Motif," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5 (1974): 1-32; Moine, "Melaniana," 72-73.

⁶⁸ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncleticae* 8 (PG 28, 1489D-1492A), where Syncletica is compared to Thecla. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 2, describes Macrina's mother's dream of Thecla on the eve of Macrina's birth; Thecla was Macrina's secret name. Thecla appears as a model often: Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 41; *Vita Olympiadis* 1; Ambrose, *De Virginitas* 2, 3 (PL 16, 212); Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 8, 1, 170; 8, 17, 232; 11, 282. For additional examples, cf. Maraval, 146, n. 2.

⁶⁹ *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 25; *Acts of Thomas* 114; *Acts of Philip* 44.

⁷⁰ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncleticae* 11, (PG 28, 1491D-1494A).

⁷¹ Patlagean, "L'histoire," 605-606 (my translation).

⁷² Cf. also Amand de Mendieta, 809-811, where Didymus and Theodora exchange clothes in Theodora's prison cell in order to save her virginity, and Jerome, *Ep.* 1, 14, where a woman saves her virtue by wearing men's clothes.

⁷³ Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 27; Canon 13: "If a woman, in the name of asceticism, changes her garment, and rather than the garment customary for women, puts on a man's garment, let it be anathema." (Hefele I: 1038); Canon 17: "If a woman, in the name of asceticism, cuts her hair, which God gave her as a reminder of her subjugation, as a release of the commandment of subjugation, let it be anathema" (Hefele I: 1040).

andreia.⁷⁴ The term is associated with virgins from very early on in the tradition; one of Hermas' similitudes in the *Shepherd* includes a description of virgins whose delicacy was contrasted with their *andreia*.⁷⁵ The term is most often used in relation to particular exceptional women: Macrina teaches her mother patience and *andreia*; John Chrysostom speaks many times of the *andreia* of Olympias, and the word also appears once in her biography, and Paulinus describes Melania the Elder's *andreia* on the occasion of her son's death. Palladius describes all of the virgins of whom he will speak as possessing *andreia* and there is a chapter of the *Historia Lausiaca* dedicated particularly to *gynaiques andreiai*.⁷⁶ The important question here is the nuance of this word, *andreia*, which refers to one of the Stoic virtues, and which also is related to the Greek root, *anēr*, meaning "man/male." Are women who are designated by this term being called "manly"? Musonius Rufus discusses in two of his discourses, first whether women should study philosophy⁷⁷ and secondly, whether daughters should receive the same education as sons. In the first discourse, Musonius states that women have the same inclination as men toward virtue, and in the second, he asserts that women are endowed with *andreia* as well as men; if it appears that *andreia* is absent from women, it is only for lack of use and practice, and not for lack of the attribute.⁷⁸ Cora Lutz, in her edition and translation of Musonius' writings, argues that Musonius goes to great lengths to defend the use of the word *andreia* in reference to women, not simply out of rhetorical zeal, but because the word actually means "manliness." She points out, further, that Plutarch's treatise *On the Bravery of Women* avoids the term, replacing it with the more general *aretē*.⁷⁹ Whether this argument alone is strong enough to support the assertion that *andreia*, when attributed to women means "manliness" is not clear; what is clear, nevertheless, is that the nuance is present in the word, even if it is not its only meaning.

This brings to a close the overview of the *idea* of virginity and asceticism as it can be deduced from the sources which exist. It is a complex notion, weighted by both theological concerns and contemporary philosophical notions, and it is not easily synthesized. Marital and sexual metaphors are found alongside demands for the absolute renunciation of sexuality and feminine nature. Virginity is called liberation from the physical exigencies of

⁷⁴ Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation," 245, n. 38; Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations* (New York: Mellen, 1979), 15, 19, 55–56; Rousselle, *Porneia*, 237.

⁷⁵ Hermas, *Pastor* 79, 5 = Sim. 9, 2, 5.

⁷⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 10; John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 3, 1; 11, 1; 12, 1 (twice); 16, 1 (twice); *Vita Olympiadis* 15; Paulinus, *Ep.* 45, 2; 3; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, Preamble (Butler, 3–4), 41.

⁷⁷ Musonius Rufus, 3, 4, *Reliquiae*, ed. O. Hense (Leipzig: Teubner, 1905) 8–19; 38–43; Lutz 40, 42–49.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 (Hense, 15, 11. 17ff; Lutz, 44, 11. 33ff).

⁷⁹ Lutz, 44, note on l. 22.

life as a woman (marriage, sexuality, childbirth); it is also called another kind of marriage, a bond where sexuality is spiritualized, where the virgin gives birth to virtue or Christ himself, where loyalty to the Bridegroom must be absolute. The feminine has no place in this virginal order; it is explicitly banished, along with passion, materiality, and the body itself. What did this banishment mean? How did women experience it and why might they have chosen it? The next two sections will try to answer these questions.

Women's Experience Of Virginity

Virginity and asceticism, though probably not institutionalized completely until much later, were part of Christian practice from very early on. Clement of Rome makes an allusion in his first-century letter to the Corinthians to those who practice chastity, and Ignatius sends a special greeting to virgins in his letter to the Smyrneans which dates from the first decade of the second century.⁸⁰ Galen's mention of the Christians, in the second half of the second century, focuses specifically on their practice of chastity, and the virginity of Christians became a common apologetic theme in second- and third-century writings.⁸¹ The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, as noted in the previous section, attest to the importance of asceticism in the spirituality of second- and third-century women. Cyprian's third-century *De Habitu Virginum* already suggests some kind of recognized category of virgins within the church, and perhaps some form of consecration by which a virgin becomes a member of such a group.⁸²

The evidence for women's asceticism becomes a bit less fragmentary with the rise of monasticism, the origins of which are traditionally placed at 307 with Pachomius' founding of a coenobitic community of monks in Egypt.⁸³ The tradition retains the story of Pachomius' sister, Maria, who came to visit her brother at his desert monastery. He refused to see her, but offered to build her a hut outside so that she might follow the ascetic life as well. She agreed and became the leader of one of the two women's monas-

⁸⁰ Clement of Rome, *Epistola 1 ad Corinthios* 38, 2; Ignatius, *Epistola ad Smyrnaeos* 13, 1; cf. also n. 11 above for other references from the Apostolic Fathers.

⁸¹ Galen, *De Sententiis Politicæ Platonice*, in *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, ed. Iwanus Mueller (Leipzig: Teubner, 1874); Justin, *Apologia* I, 14, 29; Tertullian, *Apologia* 9, 19; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, passim.

⁸² Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum* 4, 24. For an excellent study of the development of the practice of consecration of virgins, see Metz. In his discussion of the early centuries, he concludes that, while third-century texts do not rule out the practice of public vow-taking, they also do not provide enough evidence to prove its existence (66). He locates the institution of public vow-taking and the establishment of an actual order of virgins in the fourth century (74-76).

⁸³ Butler, I: 206, n. 2 argues that the 307 date is extrapolated from the Arabic version of the Pachomian life, a version which is not authoritative; he places the founding of the first monastery between 315 and 320. For general histories of monasticism in the early years, cf. Mary Bateson, "Origin and Early History of Double Monasteries," *Transactions of the*

teries which remained, along with nine men's monasteries, after Pachomius' death. The nuns in these first convents followed a strict form of asceticism which differed from that of Pachomian monks only in the matter of dress.⁸⁴ From these early beginnings, monasticism flourished, with evidence of communities of virgins in other parts of Egypt and in Palestine, Asia Minor, Syria, Rome, and other parts of Italy.⁸⁵ By the beginning of the fifth century, Theodoret reports virgins living in large communities everywhere, Palestine, Egypt, Asia, Pontus (the northeastern-most corner of Asia Minor), and Europe.⁸⁶

Monastic life was not the only way that women pursued their commitment to virginity, however. Before the formation of such communities, virgins lived with their parents or with a small number of other virgins still in the world, albeit somewhat withdrawn from it.⁸⁷ The anonymous Greek homily from the fourth century published by Amand and Moons presupposes a situation in which the virgin remained in her parents' home.⁸⁸

Royal Historical Society, n. s. 13 (London: Longmans and Green, 1899); Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966); Jean Decarreaux, *Monks and Civilization: From the Barbarian Invasions to the Reign of Charlemagne*, trans. Charlotte Haldane (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964); Karl Suso Frank, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des christlichen Mönchtums* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975); Karl Heussi, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1936); Knowles; Henri Leclercq, "Cénobitisme," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq, eds. (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1925) II: 2, cols. 3047–3248; Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); I. Gregory Smith, *Christian Monasticism from the Fourth to the Ninth Centuries of the Christian Era* (London: Innes, 1892); F. C. Woodhouse, *Monasticism Ancient and Modern* (London: Gardner, Darton, 1896).

⁸⁴ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 33. Maria's leadership is also mentioned in Athanasius' *Vita S. Antonii* 3; 54 (PG 26, 844, 921); Bateson, 139.

⁸⁵ *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 5, 5–6, cites an incalculable number of monks and virgins at Oxyrhynchus, with the bishop there claiming that he oversaw ten thousand monks and twenty thousand virgins. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 43 (*in laudem Basilii magni*) 60 (PG 36, 578) claims Basil founded a monastery of virgins in Palestine; for Paula and Eustochium's three communities in Bethlehem, cf. Jerome, *Epp.* 66, 108; for Melania's community at Jerusalem, cf. *Vita Melaniae* 41. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 59; 67. Etheria, *Peregrinatio* 23. *Vita Olympiadis* 6. Cf. also A.-J. Festugière, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* (Paris: de Boccard, 1959), passim. Ph. Schmitz, "La première communauté de vierges à Rome," *Revue Benedictine* 38 (1926): 189–195. Leclercq, "Cénobitisme," cols. 3181ff.

⁸⁶ Theodoret, *Religiosa Historia* 30 (PG 82, 1493). Cf. also Metz, 81–87, for a discussion of the earliest communities of virgins.

⁸⁷ Metz, 81 and elsewhere; Michel Aubineau, "Les écrits de Saint Athanase sur la virginité," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 31 (1955): 140.

⁸⁸ David Amand and Matthew-Charles Moons, "Une curieuse homilie grecque inédite sur la virginité adressé aux pères de famille," *Revue Bénédictine* 63 (1953): 18–69, 211–238.

Eusebius of Emesa's two homilies on virginity make no mention whatsoever of communities of virgins and, in fact, explicitly require a virgin to stay home unless her family abandons her, in which case she is permitted to live with another virgin. The practice of "home monasticism" was also common among the aristocratic women of Rome in the fourth century.⁸⁹

There is also evidence from a variety of sources for women living continentally with their husbands in marriage, apparently without suspicion.⁹⁰ However, when virgins lived with continent men, as they did in large numbers throughout the early church,⁹¹ the practice came to be challenged and condemned by church fathers and councils alike. The earliest condemnation of *virgines subintroductae*, as the women were called, came in 268 at the Council of Antioch and was followed by restrictive canons produced in 300 at Elvira, in 317 at Ancyra, and in 325 at Nicaea.⁹² Basil and Cyprian both wrote epistles against the practice, and Jerome mentions "those women who appear to be, but are not, virgins" several times. The author of the two pseudo-Clementine epistles to virgins, dating from the fourth century, also condemns *subintroductae*, as do Eusebius of Emesa, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus.⁹³ But none of these condemnations is as rhetorically rich as those produced by John Chrysostom in his two pastoral letters against the practice of cohabitation of virgins and continent brothers.⁹⁴ All of these attempts to proscribe the practice reinforce

⁸⁹ Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 6, 22; cf. Amand de Mendieta, 799–803, who sees these homilies as strong evidence for familial asceticism in the Greek east during the middle (330–350) of the fourth century; Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation,"; Yarbrough.

⁹⁰ *Acts of Thomas* 14, 15; Methodius, *Symposium*, Discourse 9, 4, 252; John Chrysostom, *Ad Viduam Iuniorum* 2; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4, 23 (PG 67, 510ff); Sozomenes, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1, 14 (PG 67, 899ff); *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 14, 3; 22, 1–2; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 8; 41; cf. also Rousselle, *Porneia* 235.

⁹¹ Hefele, I: 201, translator's n. 2: "This custom was widespread in the whole church in antiquity; we encounter it in Syria, Persia, Africa, Spain, Gaul, everywhere." For more general discussion of the practice, see Hans Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductae: Ein Beitrag zum VII. Kapitel des I. Korintherbriefs* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902), and more recently, Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends*.

⁹² *Ibid.*; cf. also Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7, 30, 12. Hefele, I: 236: Canon 27: bishops and other clerics may cohabit only with their own sisters or daughters and only if these women are virgins and have been consecrated to God. Hefele, I: 321f. Canon 19: virgins are prohibited from living like sisters with brothers. Hefele, I: 536ff. Canon 3: bishops, priests, deacons, and all other members of the clergy are prohibited from having a *syneisaktos* live with them unless she is the clergyman's mother, sister, aunt, or someone who escapes all suspicion.

⁹³ Basil, *Ep.* 55; Cyprian, *Ep.* 4; Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 15; cf. also *Ep.* 22, 14 and *Ep.* 117. Pseudo-Clement, *Epistolae* 1–2 *ad Virgines* (PG 1, 379–452); for dating, see Aimé Puech, *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à la fin du IV^e siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris: Société d'Édition "Belles Lettres," 1928–1930) II: 44. Eusebius of Emesa, *Homiliae* 6, 13; 7, 20–21. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 23. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epigrammata* 10–20 (PG 38, 86ff).

⁹⁴ John Chrysostom, *Adversus eos qui apud se habent subintroductas virgines* (PG 47,

the conclusion that it was a practice to which many virgins (and brothers) adhered. Whether virgins broke their vows of chastity in living with men, as some church leaders claimed, cannot be ascertained from the evidence. Yet it is clear that women found it a desirable arrangement in which they continued to participate at least well into the seventh century.⁹⁵

The evidence for the ages of women devoting their chastity to God varies, though many appear to have done so early in life. Palladius tells of Talis, a woman who followed the ascetic life for eighty years, of Taor, who was a virgin for sixty years, and another virgin, unnamed, who was ascetic for sixty years as well. Macrina was twelve when she decided to remain a virgin; Olympias was widowed at nineteen and refused to remarry; Blesilla, Paula's daughter and Eustochium's older sister, began her ascetic life at her widowhood at twenty; Melania the Elder, widowed at twenty-two, pursued asceticism, and her granddaughter, Melania the Younger, renounced the world at twenty, after seven years of marriage.⁹⁶ Such early marriages and widowhoods were quite common in the Roman period, as marriage, within the aristocracy at least, was the standard method of sealing pacts between families and assuring that a legitimate heir existed for the passing on of property. The marriage often occurred between an older man and a young girl, sometimes younger than twelve.⁹⁷

Despite the fact that girls were considered ready for marriage at such a young age, they were by no means thought to be capable of making decisions for themselves, and the decision to renounce the world and to guard one's virginity was not often met with encouragement from parents and other family members. Often the parents were concerned to assure the continuation of their line, as was the case with Syncletica and Melania the

495–514); *Quod regulares feminae viris cohabitare non debeant* (PG 47, 513–552); ET: Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends*.

⁹⁵ R. Kugelman and F. X. Murphy, "Virgines Subintroductae," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), XIV: 698.

⁹⁶ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 46, 56, 59–61; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae*, Maraval's introduction, 45; John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 8, 5c; *Vita Olympiadis* 2–3. Jerome, *Ep.* 39, 1; Palladius, *Vita Melaniae*, 8. Cf. Moine, "Melaniana," 65, for a challenge to Melania the Elder's age, on the basis of the unreliability of Palladius' dating.

⁹⁷ M. Durry, "Le mariage des filles impubères dans la Rome antique," *Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité*, 3d ser. 2 (1955): 262–273; cf. also Danielle Gourevitch, *Le mal d'être femme: La femme et la médecine dans la Rome antique* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Belles Lettres," 1984), 109–111; Rousselle, *Porneia* 122; M. K. Hopkins, "The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage," *Population Studies* 18 (1965): 309–327; Evelyn Patlagean, *Recherches sur les pauvres et la pauvreté dans l'empire romain d'orient (IV–VIIe siècles)*, Civilisations et Sociétés no. 48 (Mouton: Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1977), 343–351. Cyrille Vogel, "Facere cum virginia (-o) sua(-o) annos . . . L'âge des époux chrétiens au moment de contracter mariage d'après les inscriptions paléochrétiennes," *Revue de droit canonique* 16 (1966): 355–366, discusses the age of marriage for Christians based on grave inscriptions; the median age resulting from this data is nineteen years for women. Cf. article for the details of the research.

Younger. Macrina also faced opposition when, at the death of her fiancé, she decided to remain a virgin. John Chrysostom speaks of the fact that Olympias scandalized many people by her practice of asceticism, and her biography tells of the emperor confiscating her wealth because she refused to remarry after being widowed at nineteen. The problem of parental opposition provoked much rhetoric on the part of the church fathers. Paulinus of Nola describes Melania the Elder's struggle to embrace asceticism after the deaths of her husband and two of her three children:

Many were her skirmishes down to the very elements in this warfare against the vengeful dragon. . . . For the whole force of her noble relatives, armed to restrain her, attempted to change her proposal and to obstruct her passage.⁹⁸

Ambrose argues that girls can choose, by law, the men they want; why should they not be able to choose God? Jerome speaks of family members' attempts to impede girls from becoming virgins, and implores, "Mother, why are you distressed because your daughter wants to be the bride, not of a soldier, but of a king himself? She has brought you a big advantage: you have become the mother-in-law of God."⁹⁹

The decision to remain a virgin and to renounce marriage and the world did provide some virgins with an opportunity to pursue intellectual and spiritual activities which would otherwise have been unavailable to them. Especially among educated aristocratic women who wished to pursue a life of study, the life of ascetic renunciation was the only institutionally established means of pursuing intellectual work. Jerome praises the abilities of Blesilla, who knew Greek and Hebrew and rivalled her mother in the study and chanting of psalms. Melania the Younger rigorously pursued her life of study, and her biographer reports that many women from the senatorial class and other highly placed people came to her to discuss points of theology. Macrina, as noted before, is credited by Gregory of Nyssa with being her brother Basil's spiritual teacher; she was also the teacher of her mother and another brother Peter, and was the leader of the home monastic community at Annisa. Palladius lauds Melania the Elder and Olympias for their studiousness and their roles as teachers, and Olympias was also an influential leader of a monastery of women in Antioch. Other ascetic women also pursued the leadership of women's communities, notably Paula and Eustochium in Bethlehem and Melania the Younger in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vita Syncreticae* 7 (PG 28, 1489); *Vita Melaniae* 1; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 4–5; John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 8, 5c; *Vita Olympiadis* 4. Quotation from Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 29, 10. (trans. Francis X. Murphy), "Melania the Elder: A Biographical Note," *Traditio* 5 (1947): 65.

⁹⁹ Ambrose, *De Virginibus* 1, 10, 58 (PL 16, 205); Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 23, 25. For more discussion of parental opposition, cf. Yarbrough, 154–157; also cf. John Chrysostom, *Adversus Oppugnatores Vitae Monasticae* (PG 47, 318–386).

¹⁰⁰ Jerome, *Ep.* 39, 1; *Vita Melaniae* 23; 27; 54. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 6; 10; 12;

For affluent women, a life of asceticism and virginity also meant not total renunciation of their wealth, but paradoxically, control over it. Cyprian, in the third century, does not require the group of virgins to whom he writes to give up their wealth, but to be generous with it. The women of the Roman aristocracy pursued the genteel form of home asceticism without renouncing their wealth, though diverting it from the standard route of inheritance and thereby so disrupting the system of capital exchange within their class that eventually legislation was passed which prohibited such drainage of aristocratic holdings.¹⁰¹

For the most part, little is known about the financial details of much early ascetic life, aside from the sponsorship of monasteries by aristocratic Christians. Certainly, not every community of virgins possessed such sponsorship, and furthermore, the majority of virgins were not wealthy women. Ascetic life was by definition, of course, quite spartan (the genteel asceticism of certain Roman matrons notwithstanding), and the value placed on manual labor in many communities¹⁰² may have been significant enough to produce the necessities for a group of virgins. In addition, evidence from fourth-century Egypt provides a few hints of other possibilities. Three papyrus documents in particular, two letters and a contract, attest to the fact that Christian women pursued business dealings, perhaps to support themselves.¹⁰³ The letters involve a community of "sisters" which appears to be involved in a business providing commercial items to other groups of "sisters"; the letters include a rather eclectic list of objects and discussion of payment. The letters do not provide a clear indication of the nature of this group of "sisters," whether they are consecrated virgins, how many they are, how they live. The letters do suggest, however, the strong—and otherwise unattested—possibility that a group of (ascetic?) Christian women were in business to support themselves, perhaps as a community. The contract documents the fact that two nuns have rented a piece of land to a Jewish man. Otherwise, it leaves open questions about the women's background, how they came to acquire this land, where they live. But what is striking about these documents is that they provide evidence for activity among ascetic women—business dealings which may well have been the means of

16. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 55; 56. Butler's original text has Sylvania here rather than Melania, but C. H. Turner corrected this reading in his article, "The Lausiaca History of Palladius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 6 (1905): 352–354. Butler acknowledged the correction the following year, in his "Chronicle," *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1906): 309. *Vita Olympiadis* 6; Jerome, *Epp.* 66, 108; *Vita Melaniae* 41.

¹⁰¹ Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum*, 11; Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation," 241–242; cf. also Rousselle, *Porneia*, 177, who notes as well that before 320, those who chose celibacy over marriage had no claim to their inheritances.

¹⁰² Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae*, Maraval's introduction, 48–49.

¹⁰³ A. M. Emmett, "Female Ascetics in the Greek Papyri," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32 (1982); BGU 13897; P. Oxy. 1774, 3203.

support for these women—otherwise unattested by the evidence for ascetic women in the first centuries of the church. While the documents provide very little concrete information, and while their uniqueness makes conclusions difficult, they are nevertheless an important reminder that women's asceticism is not fully described or explained by the evidence traditionally preserved as the history of the church.

Women's material experience of asceticism was diverse. Living at home, continently with husbands or religious men, in communities of virgins, ascetic women pursued their spiritual commitment in widely varying activities, including study, manual labor, and perhaps also commercial involvements. In doing so, they also avoided the conventional duties and potential dangers of marriage and motherhood. What did this renunciation, in practice and colored by the ideology which gave it form, mean for women and their sexuality?

The Meaning of Virginité For Women's Sexuality

The problem of interpretation remains, and it is a difficult one because the evidence remains fragmentary, and because it suggests at best a paradoxical reading. Others have demonstrated ably how asceticism and virginity may well have appeared as liberating options to women living in a culture that offered them few alternatives beyond the conventions (and potential dangers) of marriage and motherhood. Kraemer, for example, argues this way about that asceticism described in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles:

The conversion stories of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles reveal elements of the attraction which ascetic Christianity may have held for certain women in the Greco-Roman world—either women who found the traditional roles of wife and mother inadequate measures of their worth, or women who could not participate in the rewards guaranteed by adherence to those standards—socially marginal women, widows, or barren women. Although the Acts of the Apostles are replete with conversion accounts of men, the renunciation of sexuality and sociosexual roles, as we have seen, had far greater implications for women than it did for men. Religious systems which legitimize the rejection of the established socio-sexual standards, as did ascetic Christianity, are likely to attract large numbers of discontented and marginal women and to propound standards of worth and redemption more consonant with their circumstances.¹⁰⁴

Clark and Ruether demonstrate that asceticism provided the aristocratic women of the fourth century with otherwise unavailable opportunities to pursue study and to act as administrators and spiritual leaders of their

¹⁰⁴ Kraemer, 306–307; cf. also Davies, 112–114, who argues, somewhat differently, that conversion to Christianity (as described in the Apocryphal Acts) permitted women to exempt themselves from sexual duties and to leave marriages where sexual continence was not possible.

communities. Rousselle argues that women's contribution to the development and spread of Christianity had more to do with the material and social freedom made possible under asceticism than with spiritual fervor.¹⁰⁵

These twentieth-century scholars are not the first to have asserted the "feminism" of the ascetic life. In an 1896 study probably influenced by the contemporary idea of a mother-age which preceded patriarchy, Lina Eckenstein describes the attraction of monasticism for early Christian women:

For at the time when contact with Christianity brought with it the possibility of monastic settlements, the love of domestic life had not penetrated so deeply, nor were its conditions so uniformly favourable, but that many women were ready to break away from it. Reminiscences of an independence belonging to them in the past, coupled with the desire for leadership, made many women loathe to conform to life inside the family as wives and mothers under conditions formulated by men. Tendencies surviving from an earlier period, and still unsubdued, made the advantages of married life weigh light in the balance against a loss of liberty. To conceive the force of these tendencies is to gain an insight into the elements which the convent forthwith absorbs.¹⁰⁶

It seems fairly clear that ascetic renunciation did offer women in the early church an alternative to the conventions of marriage and motherhood, and thus a kind of control over their sexuality. In marriage, a woman could not deny access to her body to her husband, and much as she might wish to control her fertility, contraception and abortion, while apparently widely practiced, remained unreliable and often dangerous.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, asceticism, despite its harsh demands, may well have seemed attractive to many women. Yet it is not at all clear that the ideology of virginity was not as domesticating and circumscribing of women's sexuality as the ideology of marriage. Furthermore, the demands of self-renunciation had far greater implications, not only physically and socially, but culturally for women than for men because of the structure of the ideas of virginity, sexuality, and femininity in relation to theological ideas about redemption.

¹⁰⁵ Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation"; Ruether, esp. 93-94; Rousselle, *Porneia*, 227.

¹⁰⁶ Lina Eckenstein, *Woman Under Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 3. Eckenstein also writes: "For the convent accepted the dislike women felt to domestic subjection and countenanced them in their refusal to undertake the duties of married life. It offered an escape from the tyranny of the family, but it did so on condition of such a sacrifice of personal independence, as in the outside world more and more involved the loss of good repute. On the face of it, a greater contrast than that between the loose woman and the nun is hard to conceive; and yet they have this in common, that they are both the outcome of the refusal among womankind to accept married relations on the basis of the subjection imposed by the father-age" (Eckenstein, 5).

¹⁰⁷ M. K. Hopkins, "Contraception in the Roman Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8 (1965/66): 124-151; Norman Himes, *A Medical History of Contraception*, 2d ed. (New York: Schocken, 1970), ch. 4; Gourevitch, 195-216; Marie-Thérèse Fontanille, *Avortement et contraception dans la médecine gréco-romaine* (Paris:

Women's sexuality, historically, has been appropriated as a tool of men's power, a sign in the masculinist system of communication, a commodity in the system of exchange.¹⁰⁸ The institution of marriage arose as part of that system of exchange, and in the Roman world a girl's body was the token which sealed agreements between families, her virginity being the measure of her value. Thus, Plutarch writes of the Romans' practice of marrying their daughters off at an early age:

But the Romans give them [their daughters] away at twelve and even younger; for thus the body and the moral character [of the girl] might be clean and untouched for the husband.¹⁰⁹

In the realm of religious virginity, women's sexuality functioned in a similar way as a token offered to God as a sign of renunciation; the virgin's body belonged to the celestial Bridegroom, conceptually, in the same way that it would have to his earthly counterpart. I am not suggesting that the experience of marriage and virginity was identical; rather, I am arguing that women's sexuality was being used structurally in the same way, that the underlying idea of women's sexuality was the same in the social world and the religious realm. The religious system adopted the reigning idea of women's sexuality as token of exchange and reinforced it by investing it with theological significance. This fact would not be especially significant, except for the way in which sexuality becomes the hinge pin for the whole system of asceticism. The renunciation of sexuality and sexual nature is a unique demand, given the meaning which is assigned sexuality by the culture. For women, their sexuality is synonymous with their identity in this cultural order; to demand its negation is to make a far more profound demand for alienation and renunciation of self than any demand for continence on the part of men. Thus Jerome's glorification, quoted above, of the virgins who say, "I want to die [dissolve myself] to be with Christ," becomes a haunting reminder of what was culturally at stake in the movement toward virginity: self-dissolution which has no counterpart in the culture of continence.

This does not mean that every virgin's experience of asceticism and

Searle Laboratoires, 1977). Part of the difficulty lay in medical misconceptions concerning female anatomy and fertility; cf. Aline Rousselle, "Observation féminine et idéologie masculine: le corps de la femme d'après les médecins grecs," *Annales* (Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations) 35 (1980): 1089-1115. -

On Christian attitudes toward contraception and abortion, see Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* II, 10 (96.1); Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 13 (which describes fallen virgins who inadvertently commit suicide by taking abortives which are poisonous); Crouzel, 80-81; R. M. Roberge, "L'avortement dans la pensée chrétienne des premiers siècles," *Collection d'Etudes Anciennes* 7 (1977): 83-90.

¹⁰⁸ This observation has been prevalent in much contemporary feminist theory, but originates with Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, rev. ed., trans. J. H. Bell: eds. J. R. von Sturmer and R. Needham (Boston: Beacon, 1969).

¹⁰⁹ Plutarch, *Vita Noma* 26, 2.

renunciation was an experience of conscious alienation. It does mean that, to the extent to which external conceptualizations shape experience, the practice of virginity was given its contours and its tone by the idea of women's sexuality as a token of exchange in a masculine system, whether that system be social or religious. This becomes clear in two sets of evidence concerning virgins: first, the imagery of marriage which provides a structure for the virgin's relationship with Jesus, including the idea that fallen virgins are adulteresses; and, second, in a small but significant corner of the tradition concerning virgins—those who committed suicide when confronted with the threat of rape.

Is it possible to tell how frequently virgins were confronted by this threat of violence; the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* speaks of a virgin of God being raped by brigands, and the isolation of eremitic women in the desert probably made them the victims of assaults more often than is recorded. Macrina's mother is said to have wanted to remain a virgin, but married to obtain protection because she feared abduction and rape. Jerome, in his letter to Eustochium, uses the tragic example of the results of Dinah's having gone out to exhort Eustochium (and other virgins) to remain indoors.¹¹⁰

In the literature on virginity itself, it is Eusebius of Emesa who raises the theme by incorporating three edifying tales of virgins into his *Homilia* 6; two of these stories—of Pelagia, and of Bernice and Prosdoco—result in the suicides of the virgins to escape rape; the third, concerning Theodora,¹¹¹ tells of the virgin's escape from prison (and the concomitant threat of rape) by trading clothes with Didymus, a fellow Christian who sneaked into her cell to save her and her virginity. The virgins are hailed as fine examples, who would die at their own hand rather than suffer the loss of their virginity. The horror of the threat of rape, as portrayed by Eusebius and others, is not the violence or the outrageousness of the attack, but the fact that it renders the virgins' bodies damaged goods, no longer eligible for the celestial bridal chamber. The problem was significant enough that the church fathers went on to debate whether a virgin had sinned in committing suicide under such circumstances; John Chrysostom concludes that the virgins had not sinned because of their sacrifice, and Ambrose says that their faith suppresses their crime. Augustine, however, asserts that flight from sin is not a sufficient motive for suicide in this case, because "the sin of others does not stain."¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 14, 4; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 2; Maraval, 145, n. 4 documents a certain frequency of such abductions during the period; Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 25.

¹¹¹ Eusebius of Emesa, *Homilia* 6, 25–28; cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7, 12, 3–4.

¹¹² John Chrysostom, *Homilia in S. Pelagiam* (PG 50, 579–584); *Homilia in SS. Bernicen et Prodocen* (PG 50, 629–640); Ambrose, *De Virginibus* 3, 7 (PL 16, 229–232); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 1, 26 (PL 41, 39–40).

It is not unimportant that, along with assigning women's sexuality and virginity this commodity-value, the ideology of virginity adopts the familiar idea of the equation of femininity and passion, both of which must be repressed, even negated. Virgins were exhorted to abandon their female nature and to pursue reason and *andreia*, whose nuance of "manliness" cannot be wholly discounted. The demand to renounce passion is therefore much more poignant when applied to women because passion itself has been located in the idea of female selfhood. The construction of the feminine as passion means that women, the embodiment or the cultural representation of the feminine, are erased by that repression of passion. Therefore, for a woman to participate in the institution which calls for the negation of the feminine is, on one level, for her to participate in a profound self-abnegation, self-denial, even self-destruction.

The result of this inquiry produces a rather bleak picture of women's experience of both marriage and virginity in late antiquity, since both experiences were framed by a constraining ideology that constructed women's sexuality as an object of value to be traded—whether in the social marketplace or in the spiritual trading ground. The practical experiences of marriage and virginity were obviously different, and for this reason, virginity must have offered a significant alternative to many women. Nevertheless, the ideology of virginity did not challenge that of the surrounding culture, but rather adopted it and added to it a theological dimension, producing perhaps an even more restrictive and coercive system. Virginity offered then an opportunity to avoid certain constraints and real sufferings while extracting a profound price, not only the abdication of sexuality through the denial of passions but a far more poignant price on the level of cultural meaning, that of identity and self. Unfortunately, because their testimony is conspicuously absent, whether that cost was a worthwhile one for the women who paid it is something which will never be known.

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Author(s): Mary Rose D'Angelo

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WOMEN PARTNERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Mary Rose D'Angelo

In 1983 in the British Museum, I saw an Augustan funerary relief depicting two women with their right hands clasped together in the gesture that expresses commitment.¹ (See photo on p. 66.) The inscription gives their names as Fonteia Eleusis and Fonteia Helena, further identifying them as freedwomen of a woman of the gens Fonteia.² In late antiquity the stone had been recut; the veils of the women were cut away and the face of one recut to make her look like a man, while the other was given a wedding ring. Presumably the reviser hoped to turn the relief into a conventional funerary portrait of husband and wife, like the famous portrait of "Porcia and Cato"

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¹ B.M. Sculpture 2276. A. H. Smith, *A Catalogue of Sculpture in the British Museum, Greek, Etruscan and Roman* II (1904), 290–91. For a more recent and complete publication, see Susan Walker in Susan Walker and Andrew Burnett, *Augustus: Handlist of the Exhibition* (London: British Museum Publications, 1981), 43–47. The date can be estimated with a fair degree of precision. See below and Walker, 44.

² *CIL* 6 inscription number 18524 described as: tabula marmorea Londinii in Museo Britanico:

Fonteia. C. L. ELEUSIS . HODATA . Fonteia. C. L. HELENA

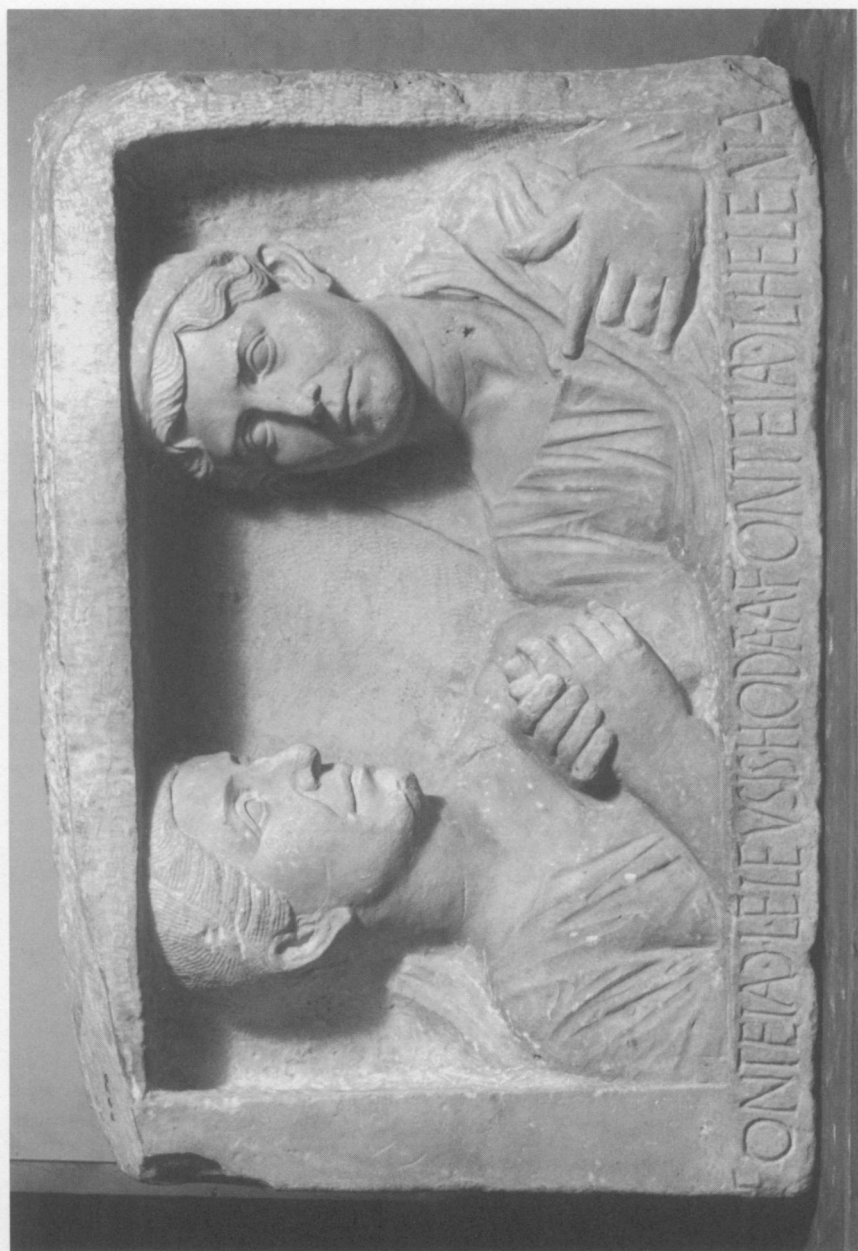
Walker gives an expansion and translation:

Fonteia G(aiae) l(iberta) Eleusis h(uic?) olla Data Fonteia G(aiae) l(iberta) Helena.

Fonteia Eleusis, freedwoman of Gaia. The burial urn granted to her. Fonteia Helena, freedwoman of Gaia.

She credits this interpretation to Dr. Daniele Manacorda, Università de Siena (43–44, 45 n. 6). The translation identifies the patron as Gaia Fonteia. It should be noted that Arthur Gordon and Susan Treggiari seem to view the reversed C for Caia not as the actual praenomen but as an indication that the patron was a woman. See Gordon, "On Reversed C (= Gaiae)" *Epigraphica* 40 (1978): 230; Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), Appendix 2, 250.

The inscription is highly idiosyncratic, and the interpretation given by Manacorda and Walker is questioned by R. Stupperich, "Zur Dextrarum Iunctio auf frühen römischen Grabreliefs," *Boreas* 6 (1983): 146–47, who also believes it to be later than the original portrait.



(M. Gratidius Libanus and Gratidia M. L. Chrite) in the Vatican.³ The recutting was probably suggested by the handclasp, which is frequently (though not exclusively) used to depict the marriage bond.⁴

Seeing the stone raised for me the question of the intentions of the woman who ordered the relief and her understanding of the relationship she sought to commemorate and to communicate by it. It also recalled another first-century context in which evidence of the participation of women had been clumsily recut to fit the conceptions of later centuries: the New Testament. The "Junia" of Rom. 16:7 became "Junias" in the sixteenth century lest a woman be given the title "apostle."⁵ In some manuscripts of Colossians, "Nympha" (4:15) suffered the same fate.⁶ The relief also inspired me to reflect on the relationships between women whose names are mentioned together in the New Testament and to ask whether they may not be relics of the silenced past of women's affective lives and relationships with each other. This essay will attempt to set the British museum relief and three pairs of women from the New Testament into a common perspective. The social context of the mutilated portrait enables us to retrieve some understanding of the lives it memorialized. Within this context, the references to Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12), Evodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2) and

³ This portrait has been widely published; see for example D. Reddig de Campos, *Art Treasures of The Vatican* (New York: Park Lane, 1974), pl. 288, p. 397. For a bibliography, see, Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraits: The Funerary Reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire* (New York and London: Garland, 1977), 215.

⁴ The recutting appears to date from the fourth century; my description of its extent comes from Walker's treatment (43–44). In saying that the handclasp suggested the recutting, I mean that the handclasp offered an opportunity; it is impossible to be certain of the purpose of the recutting. When the museum acquired the piece it was no longer *in situ*. R. Stupperich has argued that the portrait originally represented a man and wife (143–50). Walker pointed out in a letter to me that this does not take account of the Augustan inscription. Neither Walker nor Stupperich compares the portraits with other recut portraits. I have been unable to find any discussion of other portraits of this type undergoing recutting in antiquity, although the portrait of Gratidius and Gratidia was recut in the modern period. See Georg Daltrop in *The Vatican Collections: the Papacy and Art* (Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983), 210–11.

⁵ See Bernadette Brooten, "Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles (Romans 16:7)" in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, ed. L. Swidler and A. Swidler (New York: Paulist, 1977), 141–44; also C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, *Commentary on Romans and Essays* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979, 1981), 788.

⁶ The change requires a circumflex on the second syllable and a change of pronoun from "her" to "his"; according to K. Aland et al. *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, 26th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsch Bibelgesellschaft, 1985), 530, this change is attested by Claromontanus as well as a great many other texts. Other ancient texts, including Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, give the pronoun as "their." The reading "Nympha" (which is preferred by Aland) is attested by Vaticanus, 1739, the Harclean Syriac and the Sahidic, as well as by some small number of Greek minuscules.

Martha and Mary (John 11:1–12:12; Luke 10:38–42) take on a new meaning. They emerge as evidence of partnerships of women in the early Christian mission, partnerships that have been “recut” by both the writers and the interpreters of the New Testament to fit their ideas about the role and place of women and the theological concerns of their works. These partnerships reveal a commitment between women that, in the light of early Christian revision of sexual mores, can be seen as a sexual choice.

The Funerary Relief and Its Context

The funerary relief of Eleusis and Helena (or dedicated to Helena by Eleusis) belongs to a category of sculptures called *libertini* portraits (portraits of freedwomen and freedmen). The date can be estimated with a fair degree of precision. Reliefs of this type occur primarily from the reign of Augustus.⁷ They depict two or more figures, usually *conliberti* (as in this case), sometimes with their patron. Nearly all of the persons depicted in these reliefs appear to have been freedpersons. Diana E. E. Kleiner has published a study of ninety-two of these sculptures.⁸

The sculptures seem to have responded to a special social need of freedmen and freedwomen. Slaves were removed from their natural families and grafted into the *familia* of their owner by enslavement, so that freedmen were not allowed to name their parents on their epitaphs, but only their patrons. Kleiner views the portraits as substitutes for ancestor portraits by which freedmen and women celebrate the legitimacy of the new family created when they were freed.⁹ This family might include patrons, wives, children or *conliberti*. Many of these portraits are of or include a husband and wife. Kleiner’s catalogue does not include the British Museum sculpture, but does include three portraits of two women, two of them bust-length, like that of Eleusis and Helena, the third full-length (Kleiner, figs. 8–10),¹⁰ as well as seven portraits of pairs of men.

None of the same-sex portraits in Kleiner’s study includes the *dextrarum inunctio*, the handclasp of the British Museum sculpture. Indeed, Kleiner claims that in the Roman funerary reliefs, the handclasp is always between

⁷ Susan Walker and Andrew Burnett, *The Image of Augustus* (London: British Museum Publications, 1981), 36–41.

⁸ See note 3 above.

⁹ Kleiner, 23–24. On the social complexities of the lives of freedpersons, see Paul Veyne “The Household and its Freed Slaves,” in *A History of Private Life*, vol. 1, *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. Paul Veyne, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1987), 71–94.

¹⁰ No. 10 seems to have been dedicated to women patrons by freedmen; Walker describes the *patronae* as freedwomen, although the designation does not appear in Kleiner’s version of the inscription. The relationships in no. 8 and no. 9 are less than clear. See Kleiner, 199–200; Walker, 45; 46, n. 21.

men and women and expresses the marital relationship. She ties it to the Roman marriage ceremony.¹¹ The gesture is frequent as an expression of marital fidelity in the *libertini* reliefs, particularly those which portray several persons; in the latter, the gesture seems to be used to clarify the relationships.¹² But this is not its only function. The gesture has a long history in Greek and Etruscan funerary art in which it represents a farewell, or possibly fidelity beyond the grave, from family members, friends or servants.¹³ Susan Walker places the British Museum sculpture in the context of Greek funerary art; in her view, the gesture may express the fidelity of Eleusis to the dead Helena.¹⁴ She suggests that the posture of Eleusis and Helena differs from Roman marital portraits (and many Greek funerary portraits).¹⁵ She suggests an age difference between the two women that might indicate that Eleusis was the mother of Helena. That the relationship is not acknowledged by the inscription could be explained if Helena was born in slavery; the absence of a male figure or reference to the father could be explained if the father was free.¹⁶ But she also points out that they could be *conlibertae*.¹⁷

The weight of these two identifications of the women (as mother and daughter and as *conlibertae*) might well be reversed: the inscription identifies them as *conlibertae*; they may also be mother and daughter.¹⁸ In either case, the *dextrarum iunctio* in the British Museum sculpture extends what the reliefs already express—the new bond that substitutes for blood relationship in a society in which the family could be constituted legally and was of overwhelming importance. If the two women were mother and daughter their relationship had to be reaffirmed in new terms.

¹¹ Kleiner, 23–24.

¹² See, in addition to the portrait of Gratidius and Gratidia mentioned above, Kleiner, figs. 18, 28, 31, 60, 65, 68, 80, 81, 85, 87, 90, 92, 93. Stupperich's theory that the pair were originally a marital couple and that the husband on the left was recut to make a woman seems to spring from his conviction that the meaning of the gesture on the grave reliefs is marital. "Zur Dextrarum Iunctio," 143–50.

¹³ On this, Walker 44, 45 n. 12, also Richard Brilliant, *Gestures and Rank in Roman Art: The Use of Gestures to Denote Status in Roman Sculpture and Coinage*, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences Memoir no. 14 (New Haven, Conn. 1963), 18–21, 34–35, 45, 78–79.

¹⁴ Walker, 44.

¹⁵ 44 and n. 14. But see Georg Daltrop's description of the posture of Gratidius and Gratidia (210–11).

¹⁶ 44 and n. 6.

¹⁷ 44.

¹⁸ The hypothesis that they are mother and daughter requires that we assume that the inscription does not say so because the relationship is negated by slavery and that the father was free, and so cannot be named. See Walker, 44, n. 6 p. 45; see also Jane Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), 213–18.

One more aspect of the relief demands attention. The names Helena and Eleusis are related names, like Tryphaena and Tryphosa. They are connected not by a common root but by a common context. Eleusis recalls the mysteries of Demeter and Kore that were celebrated there;¹⁹ Helena may recall one of the requirements of these mysteries, which was knowledge of the Greek tongue. It is possible that these names reflect only the women's Greek origins, or the Roman preference for Greek names for slaves.²⁰ They may also express the two freedwomen's own devotion; Helena wears a band that may signify initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries.²¹ But it is also possible that their mistress Fonteia gave them these names and sponsored the initiation, and the names reflect her devotion.²² The mysteries were open to slave as well as free.

The relief of Eleusis and Helena commemorates a commitment between the two women it portrays, a commitment that is memorialized as a family relationship would be for persons who were born free. But in the context of the other relief portraits, that of Eleusis and Helena seems deliberately to suggest that the relationship between the women embodies a commitment equal to that between husband and wife.²³ The question immediately arises whether the relationship can be regarded as lesbian. But this is an extremely difficult question to answer. If we know little about the affective lives of women in antiquity, we know still less of the lives of women who loved women. It is certainly the case that female homoeroticism was known to antiquity. A very few love charms in which a woman seeks the love of another woman give direct evidence.²⁴ And Bernadette Brooten has made an im-

¹⁹ Eleusis is an unusual cognomen; I have found only one more certain occurrence, in a Roman grave relief in *CIL* 6:11199. It has also been conjectured at in *CIL* 6:28819. In both cases (as in our inscription) the women who use the cognomen are *libertae*. Eleusina occurs as a cognomen in *CIL* 6:24804.

²⁰ Greek names were common among slaves and are common among the *libertini* reliefs. Walker, 44.

²¹ Walker, 44.

²² Cf. Susan Treggiari, who points out that slave names may reflect not origin but the personal taste of the slave owner or dealer. *Roman Freedmen*, 7–8.

²³ Walker remarks on the unique use of the gesture, but tries to distinguish the portrait from similar portraits of husband and wife. She contrasts the stance of the two women (Eleusis looks at Helena, who looks into the distance) to portraits of husband and wife which look at one another; she cites Kleiner, cat. no. 80 as an example (Walker 44, n. 14 pp. 45–6). But see the description of the relief of Gratidius and Gratidia given by Daltrop in *The Vatican Collections*, 210–11. In Kleiner's collection, most male-female couples seem to be presented frontally, and at least in no. 22 and no. 34, the couples are turned toward each other, but their eyes do not seem to meet.

²⁴ For one example, see *PGM* 32.1–19 in Ross Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), no. 51, 95. The translation she uses is that of E. N. O'Neill, from Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, including the Demotic Spells*, vol.

pressive collection of derogatory references to female homoeroticism in Greek, Roman and Jewish literature. But, as she herself stresses, the material she presents "attests to the male attitudes toward and male fantasies about, lesbians, and the men writing are heavily genitally oriented."²⁵

Brooten points out that literary invective against lesbians increases in the Roman period and especially in Rome; she suggests that it may reflect more open behavior among women in that context.²⁶ It is possible that the relief, like the love charms, is a remnant of such behavior. But it cannot be claimed with any certainty that the funerary relief gives evidence about the erotic life of Helena and Eleusis. What their handclasp announces is a commitment between women: not necessarily a commitment that is exclusive or primarily erotic in character, but one that is primary and major, that bears the weight that a family commitment would have borne.²⁷ This commitment may have involved a recreated familial relationship, a partnership in work, a religious commitment, or some combination of these.

Such a commitment, however, might well be considered as belonging to the range of woman-identification that Adrienne Rich describes as a lesbian continuum.²⁸ Scholarly literature has begun to provide a history—or pre-history—for lesbian women by examining the contexts within which women were able to share their lives.²⁹ Lillian Faderman has attempted to describe a wide range of female commitment including love but not necessarily genital sex; her study is devoted to women in Europe and the United States

1, *Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 266. It seems to date from the second century C.E. (Betz, xxiv). The discussion in Betz (266) mentions other such spells; Ross Kraemer informs me that a group of magic tablets being prepared for publication by John Gager also includes a love spell involving two women.

²⁵ "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women and Female Homoeroticism," in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, Harvard Women's Studies in Religion Series, ed. Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan and Margaret M. Miles (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 79.

²⁶ "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women," 79–80; Brooten is now engaged in a larger study of the reactions of male writers to female homoeroticism and the way male attitudes shaped women's lives.

²⁷ On understanding multiplicity of commitment in a feminist vein, see Margaret A. Farley, *Personal Commitments: Making, Keeping, Changing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

²⁸ "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979–1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), 23–75, esp. 51–56, first published in *Signs* 5 (1980): 631–60. It should be noted that her suggestion has been subjected to extensive criticism; see the critiques by Martha E. Thompson, in *Signs* 6 (1981): 790–94, and Ann Ferguson, Jacquelyn N. Zita and Kathryn Pyne Adelson in *Signs* 7 (1982): 159–99. Of more significance is Rich's own concern that the term not be used by women who have not yet begun to examine the privilege and solipsisms of heterosexuality.

²⁹ See Brooten's formulation based in part on Adrienne Rich's suggestion: "the history of women who found their primary identification in other women and who may or may not have expressed that sexually"; "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women," 79.

from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.³⁰ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has traced a “women’s world of love and ritual” that made a system of support for women in nineteenth-century America.³¹ E. Ann Matter and Judith Brown have looked at lesbian love among monastic women of the middle ages and renaissance.³² All of these women raise cautions about the use of the word *lesbian* before the late nineteenth century. Ann Matter is now engaged in a more complex study of the relation between women’s religiosity and community in seventeenth-century Italy.³³ These studies can provide new perspectives from which to raise questions to the slender but still underutilized evidence for the lives of late antique and early Christian women.

On the whole, interpreters have shown little interest in the relationships between women in the New Testament. The individual pairs of Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Evodia and Syntyche and Martha and Mary are something of an exception. Commentators have given some attention to the connection between the two women in each of these pairs, but until recently any analysis has been overlaid with modern assumptions about women’s lives in antiquity. Moreover, the three pairs have not been set in a common context. The pairing of these women can best be understood as reflecting the early Christian practice of missionaries working in couples. In the relief, the connection between the two women takes the foreground; the possibility that their commitment is mediated by a devotion to the mysteries is adumbrated only in the background. In the early Christian pairs, it is the women’s participation in the Christian mission that takes the foreground. But that should not obscure the recognition that their commitment to the mission can also be seen as a commitment to each other.

The New Testament Pairs

Tryphaena and Tryphosa

In Rom. 16:12, Paul greets two women missionaries: “Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have laboured in the Lord.” This brief reference is the

³⁰ *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981).

³¹ *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University, 1985), 53–76.

³² Matter, “My Sister, My Spouse: Woman-Identified Women in Medieval Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2 (1986): 81–94. J. Brown, “Lesbian Sexuality in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Sister Benedetta Carlini,” *Signs* 9 (1984): 751–58; *Immodest Acts: the Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Oxford University, 1986).

³³ “Discourses of Desire: Sexuality and Christian Women’s Visionary Narratives” *Journal of Homosexuality* (forthcoming); “Interior Maps of an Eternal External: The Spiritual Rhetoric of Maria Domitilla Galuzzi d’Acqui,” in *Maps of Flesh and Light: Aspects of the Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming).

simplest to discuss, for the relationship it reveals has been obscured only by failure to grasp its significance in the context. Romans 16 is primarily an unusually extensive series of greetings that form the closing of the letter; far from being a mere appendix, these greetings are of major significance to the purpose of the letter. Romans was written to a community Paul did not know, in part as a prelude to a visit there. The greetings of chapter 16 constitute one of the ways he establishes a connection between himself and the important Roman community. Those whom Paul greets should be assumed to be persons of real consequence in the community, whose recommendation will insure the acceptance of the letter. While some of these figures may be known to Paul only by reputation, the greater number must have been known to him personally, and therefore must have traveled to Rome from somewhere in the East.³⁴ The use of nouns like "coworker" and the verb "labor" stresses their role in the missionary effort.³⁵ Thus both the use of the word "labored" and the context and function of Romans 16 confirm that Tryphaena and Tryphosa should be seen as missionaries.

Scholars who have noticed that Paul uses one verb for the two ("Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who *labored*") have offered a variety of explanations for the fact that Paul greets them as a pair. One frequent explanation is that the common origin of their names suggests that they were sisters. Another view is that they were separate individuals but the similarity of their names brought Paul to remember them together.³⁶ But the explanation that best suits the context in Romans is that Tryphaena and Tryphosa were a missionary couple, partners in the early Christian mission.

The missionary couple constitutes a category that is well accepted by New Testament scholars. It is usually viewed as a partnership of husband and wife. The greetings in Romans 16 include four male-female pairs: Prisca and Aquila (16:3), Andronicus and Junia (16:7), Philologus and Julia, and Nereas and his "sister" (16:15). These four pairs are normally explained as husband-wife pairs, partly on the basis of Acts' description of Prisca and Aquila (18:1–3). Paul appears to consider it the norm as well as a right for an apostle "to bring along a sister as wife," that is, to be accompanied by a wife who is also supported as a missionary (1 Cor. 9:2).³⁷ Modern commentators tend to

³⁴ Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 16–17.

³⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 169 and 200, n. 25; Cranfield, 784–85. The terminology for functions in the early Christian mission was very fluid and in Romans 16 Paul uses more verbs than titles to designate missionary function. Schüssler Fiorenza has already pointed to the number of women who are greeted in Romans 16 (179–80).

³⁶ Cranfield (793) prefers the former, against Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 395.

³⁷ See Ernst Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 153.

assign the woman to the role of "sister" and to define the role as a supplement to the husband's mission. When Ernst Käsemann, for instance, comments upon the role of Prisca, he stresses the woman's ability to work in the "women's quarters."³⁸ But even Acts, which certainly seeks to limit the roles of women in the community, does not envisage Prisca's work in these terms.³⁹ The evidence suggests that "sister" and "wife" are not coterminous. The woman was not necessarily designated "sister" in all the male-female pairs; Rom. 16:7 speaks of both Andronicus and Junia as "apostles"; 16:3–4 addresses both Prisca and Aquila as "co-workers." The titles used for missionaries in this period are very fluid, and it should not be assumed that "sister" always had the same meaning. But "sister" deserves further attention, and will be discussed in the treatment of Martha and Mary below.

Missionary couples in the early Christian movement are by no means always composed of a husband and wife. At least one more male/female pair in Romans 16 may well describe missionaries; in Rom. 16:13 Paul greets "Rufus and his mother and mine." The synoptic tradition seems to envision missionary pairs as the norm of the mission, but not husband and wife or male and female pairs (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1; note also the pairing of the names of the twelve in Matt. 10:2–3). Paul himself does not have a woman as missionary companion. But he seems always to be accompanied. At least in the case of Sosthenes, and perhaps also in that of Timothy (2 Cor. 1:1, Col. 1:1, but see Phil. 1:1), the companion appears to bear the title "brother" (*adelphos*), the equivalent of sister, and to be an assistant of Paul.⁴⁰

Thus Tryphaena and Tryphosa should probably be seen as women missionaries who "labor" together in the mission rather than as names adventitiously connected in Paul's memory. And working together as a pair should be seen as a choice for Tryphaena and Tryphosa, at least as much as for Paul and his partners, or for Junia and Andronicus. While it is unlikely that women or for that matter men traveled alone, there were probably missionaries, including women missionaries, who worked and traveled without specific partners in the mission. The commendation of Phoebe and the greetings to Mary and to Persis in Rom. 16:1–2, 6 and 12 suggest this.⁴¹ But

³⁸ Käsemann, 413.

³⁹ See Acts 18:1–3, 26. Prisca and Aquila together instruct Apollos. See also Cranfield, who with many others concludes that the texts give Prisca's name first because of her precedence in time or prominence within the community (784). On Luke's treatment of women, see Mary R. D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," *JBL*, forthcoming; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "A Feminist Critical Interpretation for Liberation: Martha and Mary: Luke 10:38–42," *Religion and Intellectual Life* 3 (1986): 21–35, esp. 31.

⁴⁰ Col. 1:1 is probably the work of an interpreter who imitates one of the other instances. This may also be the case with the salutation of 2 Corinthians, which is frequently regarded as composed out of *membra disiecta* of Paul's correspondence.

⁴¹ It is possible that Mary and Persis each had a partner who was unknown to Paul. This seems unlikely in the case of Phoebe. Thecla is a later and somewhat fictive example of a woman who does not share her mission with a partner.

missionary pairs seem to have been the norm for the early Christian mission, and no doubt held particular advantages to women, for whom the considerable difficulties of traveling must have been greatly increased.

It remains possible that Tryphaena and Tryphosa were sisters as well as partners. But there is another possible origin for their relationship that is at least as appropriate to the social context of early Christianity. The similarity of Tryphaena and Tryphosa may also indicate that they were members not of a blood family, but of a single *familia*.⁴² Like the figures in the *libertini* reliefs they may have chosen to sustain the bond with their *conliberti* as an aid to work and to life.

Another connection between Tryphaena and Tryphosa and the funerary reliefs, especially that of Helena and Eleusis, is context. Like Helena and Eleusis, Tryphaena and Tryphosa are located in Italy only about eighty years after the relief was made; they too bear Greek names. Slaves in Italy were frequently given Greek names, and it is possible that their relationship is enabled by the more open atmosphere of Rome hypothesized by Brooten. Their names do not reveal an ethnic identity; they may be Italians or even Jews like Junia and Andronicus. But it is also possible that they came from somewhere in the Greek East and encountered Paul in their journeys.

Evodia and Syntyche

The second piece of evidence about women partners in the mission is found in Phil. 4:1. There Paul solicits the agreement of two women, Evodia and Syntyche, whom he describes as having "co-contested with him in the gospel." The terms in which he couches this request (*parakalo*, *eroto*) are both authoritative and extremely conciliatory and indicate that this entreaty is one of the major concerns of the letter. They are reminiscent of the entreaty for agreement in 1 Cor. 1:10. But the expectations and prejudices of interpreters have shaped the characterization of the relationship between the two women in Phil. 4:1–2. These verses are usually interpreted as Paul's attempt to reconcile a quarrel between the two women that is damaging to the Philippian community. This is the case in the relatively restrained comments of G. B. Caird, who recognizes Evodia and Syntyche as missionaries and suggests that they were members of Paul's missionary team. Caird emphasizes both the relatively freer position of women in Macedonian society and the weight of the verb Paul uses to describe their work: "They co-contested with me in the gospel."⁴³ Valerie Abrahamsen's recent article on Christian women at Philippi also stresses their importance in the community

⁴² Both names occur frequently in funerary inscriptions of the *CIL*. A few of these are also designated as *libertae*; for Tryphaena, see *CIL* 6:18103 (Rome), 12:3398 (Gallia Narbonensis), 14:415, 734 (Ostia), 3348 (Praeneste); Tryphosa, *CIL* 6:15280 (Rome), 14:1728 (Ostia).

⁴³ *Paul's Letters from Prison in the Revised Standard Version: A Commentary*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 149–50.

and describes the problem Paul seeks to resolve as a "religious conflict."⁴⁴ I accept this vision of the women as Christian missionaries, but I wish to suggest both a different way of viewing their relationship and a different interpretation of the problem Paul's entreaty addressed. First, Evodia and Syntyche can be seen as a missionary couple, partners in the mission, rather than as individual members of Paul's missionary team. They may in fact have been independent of Paul, as Apollos seems to have been in Corinth. Second, it is entirely possible that the "religious conflict" that Paul seeks to settle in Phil. 4:2 is a dispute not between Evodia and Syntyche but between Paul on the one hand and the two women missionaries on the other. Nils A. Dahl has suggested that the entreaty in 1 Cor. 1:10 should be read as a call to reconciliation *with Paul*.⁴⁵ Quite a different picture of the situation in Philippi emerges if Paul seeks to settle a disagreement between himself and women partners who are "co-athletes." Earlier in the letter, Paul expresses anxiety about others who preach the gospel during his imprisonment. He does not dispute that they preach the true gospel; indeed, he gives thanks that it is preached, even if it is with the intention of making him unhappy (Phil. 1:14–17). It is possible that the preachers he views as his rivals in the gospel are or include the women whose agreement he entreats in Phil. 4:2.⁴⁶ If so, he names Clement and refers to the many others who have worked together (4:3) not as the other members of a team that still exists, but rather as associates of a formerly happy relationship between himself and this pair.⁴⁷

In the case of Evodia and Syntyche, the local traditions of Macedonia may play some role in their ability to work together; another factor may be the status of Philippi as a Roman colony, which Luke stresses so strongly in

⁴⁴ "Women at Philippi: The Pagan and Christian Evidence," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 3 (1987): 17–30. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 170; Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Seen by First Century Philippian Women*, New Testament Series 20 (Uppsala: Coniectanea Biblica, 1988).

⁴⁵ Nils Alstrup Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth according to 1 Cor 1:10–4:21," *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 40–61.

⁴⁶ But note that not all scholars are convinced of the integrity of Philippians. For a summary of the arguments for its composite nature, see *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement* s.v. "Philippians, Letter to the."

⁴⁷ Francis X. Malinowski, C. S. Sp., has argued that there is insufficient evidence that Evodia and Syntyche were missionaries. Because Paul refers to them as co-athletes (*synelthesan*) but not co-workers (*synergoi*), they should be seen as confessors but not necessarily as engaged in preaching the gospel. This attaches more precise definition to early Christian terminology than can be sustained by the evidence we have. Paul uses the athletic image for preaching the gospel in 1 Cor. 9:24–27. See "The Brave Women of Philippi," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985): 60–64, where Malinowski cites a wide variety of recent literature that does treat them as missionaries.

Acts 16:12. But it should be remembered that if the women are missionaries, they may well have originated and become associated elsewhere; their names give no information about their ethnic origin.

Martha and Mary

The third pair has received far more attention in tradition and criticism, and their partnership has been recut not merely by commentators but also by the very gospel writers who mediate the memory of this relationship. The names of Martha and Mary appear in two very different contexts in the New Testament. They are usually remembered through the brief aphoristic story in Luke 10:38–42 which has made Martha synonymous with housework and Mary with contemplation in the hagiographical tradition.⁴⁸ They also appear in central roles in the complex suite of stories and dialogues in John 11:1–12:19 which precipitates the death of Jesus. There they are joined by a brother, Lazarus, whose role is entirely passive.

These two contexts manifest limited but striking correspondences. In both Luke and John, Mary is described as the “sister” of Martha, and Martha is said to “minister.” In both Luke and John, Martha is the dominant figure.⁴⁹ In both cases, she initiates the approach to Jesus in the narrative (Luke 10:38, John 11:21). In both cases, Martha does the talking; Mary has but a single line of dialogue in the Gospel of John, and that line repeats Martha’s approach to Jesus (John 11:21, 32). According to Luke, the house is hers (Luke 10:38). In both cases, the reception of Jesus, his welcome into the house, is a major concern in the stories. Martha’s dominance in John may indicate that in that gospel also she is regarded as the house’s owner. In both Luke and John, Martha is associated with “ministry” (*diakonia*); in John 12:2, she is said to have been present at the dinner and to have been “serving” (*diēkonei*); in Luke she is said to have been busy about much “serving” (*diakonia*). Finally, in both gospels, Mary is described as the sister of Martha (Luke 10:39, John 11:1, 28), and as acting like a disciple: she sits at Jesus’ feet (Luke 10:39); she anointed Jesus’ feet (John 11:2, 12:3). Thus the common tradition knows of a woman named Martha who ministered, who received Jesus into her house, who had a “sister” named Mary, who was a disciple.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ For a typology of the traditional interpretations of this story, as well as feminist approaches to interpretation, see Schüssler Fiorenza, “Martha and Mary,” 21–35.

⁴⁹ The tradition has of course focussed on Mary. On the question of the relative roles of the two women in John 11:1–12:11 and attempts to resolve it through questions of source and redaction, see R. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i–xiii)* vol. 1, Anchor Bible 29a (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 432–35, 449–54 and E. Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7–21*, trans. Robert W. Funk, ed. Robert W. Funk with Ulrich Busse, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 67–72, 85–89.

⁵⁰ This does not establish the historical existence of Martha and Mary; it does suggest the nucleus that is known to both Luke and John.

These slender pieces of evidence take on a new significance in light of the practices of the early Christian mission and its vocabulary. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has argued that “minister” (*diakonos*) and “sister” (*adelphē*) function as titles of the early Christian mission and has suggested that the stories in Luke and John at once conceal and reveal the functions of Martha and Mary in the mission.⁵¹ I wish to sharpen her focus and extend her analysis by suggesting that the Martha and Mary behind the stories in Luke and John were a missionary *couple*, a pair like Paul and Sosthenes. As Paul designated himself “apostle” and Sosthenes “brother” (*adelphos*; 1 Cor. 1:1), so Martha was designated *diakonos* and Mary “sister” (*adelphē*).

To do this I shall reinterpret three pieces of evidence that have received less attention than the function of *diakonia/diakonos/diakonēo* in describing the Christian ministry. First, the importance of the house in the stories about Martha and Mary suggests that these women were heads of a house church, like those in which Prisca and Aquila, and Philemon, Apphia and Archippus presided.⁵² A second piece of evidence that deserves more attention is an ancient and widespread reading of Luke 10:39. In most of the texts, the verse reads: “. . . she [Martha] had a sister named Mary *who also* [*hē kai*] sat at the feet of Jesus.” This reading suggests that both women “sat at the feet of Jesus,” that is, were his disciples.⁵³ The Revised Standard Version translates this verse “And she had a sister called Mary who sat. . .”⁵⁴ This translation is based upon the omission of the relative pronoun in a number of

⁵¹ *In Memory of Her*, 165–73, 164–69; “Martha and Mary,” 30–34. See also D’Angelo, “Women in Luke-Acts.”

⁵² Martha and Mary are Semitic names and may indeed indicate that the two women originated in the movement around Jesus and formed part of the “settled communities” that Gerd Theissen describes as the support of the wandering charismatics of the movement; see *The Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 8–23. But I do not assume that they played the roles of *diakonos*, sister and householder in the lifetime of Jesus, but only that they are known to John and Luke in these terms (see below). As such, they may be members of the mission in the same way as Prisca and Aquila, Philemon, Apphia and Archippus. Prisca and Aquila are credited with hospitality to and leadership of a church; but the fact that they know Paul means that they are acquainted with him from somewhere other than Rome (as Luke also believes; Acts 18: 1–4). Thus it seems that missionary traveling and running a household/community are not to be opposed but related as compatible, or perhaps successive aspects of the early mission.

⁵³ Cf. Acts 22:3 where Paul claims to have been brought up “at the feet of Gamaliel” (*para tous podas Gamaliel*), also *Pirke Aboth* 1.4: “Jose ben Joezer of Zeredah said, Let thy house be a gathering place for the sages and sit (lit. “be covered with”) amid the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst.” Translation by H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1933), 446. *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan Version A* 6 speaks of sitting (*ysb*) before one’s teachers throughout.

⁵⁴ See also the New English Bible and Jerusalem Bible which clearly use the same text; none of these translations notes a variant here.

ancient manuscripts.⁵⁵ Although the textual evidence for the omission is early and good, there are strong reasons for preferring to include the pronoun. The change from "who also" to "and she" is accomplished by the omission of a single letter, and is quite easy to explain. The expression "sat at the feet of" Jesus came to be less widely understood as an expression of discipleship, and taken as a literal description of the scene, the story made no sense if Martha also was sitting down. The reading "who also" suggests that the author of Luke still understood the story as presenting two women disciples, and strengthens my suggestion that they were a pair.

The third piece of evidence which bears consideration is the uses of *adelphos/adelphē*. The meaning of *diakonos/diakoneo* has received considerable attention in descriptions of the roles of Phoebe and Martha. Its communal context is fairly widely accepted. And the words *adelphos/adelphē* are also seen as having significance for the ministry. Luke's narrative strongly suggests that the author is conscious of this function for both words.⁵⁶ But in order to make my point clear, it is necessary to look at the context of "brother/sister" (*adelphos/adelphē*) in missionary partnerships.

The pair "brother/sister" is used throughout the Pauline corpus and in much of the rest of the New Testament as an address to the community (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:10, 11, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6 and so on). Much of the time it denotes no more than that the persons addressed or mentioned are members of the movement. But in some instances it seems to take on a specialized meaning. In some of the highly formal salutations, Paul uses "brother" to introduce a partner where he uses "apostle" to introduce himself. This is the case with Sosthenes in 1 Cor. 1:1 and Timothy in Phlm. 1 and 2 Cor. 1:1. When he refers to Timothy's embassy on his own behalf in 1 Thess. 3:2, he refers to him as "brother and co-worker." In Rom. 16:21, Paul refers to Timothy as his coworker; in Phil. 1:1, Paul refers to himself and Timothy together as slaves of Christ. In 2 Cor. 1:19 and 1 Thess. 1:1, Paul refers to himself, Sylvanus and Timothy without distinguishing titles.

This collection of evidence prompts two observations. First, the title is used to designate Timothy as Paul's partner in the mission in much the same way that "sister" can be used to designate the woman in a missionary pair. If letters from Nereas had survived, they might well be signed by Nereas the apostle or co-worker and the sister whom Paul never names. Philemon is addressed Philemon the beloved and coworker, Apphia the sister and Archippus the cosoldier. Secondly, the title's context is not fixed; it can be a synonym for *synergos*, but also can simply be a polite form of address. Thus

⁵⁵ Aland et al. include the article in brackets. In their apparatus, the manuscripts which omit the article include P45 and P75, the uncorrected Sinaiticus and the second corrector of Vaticanus.

⁵⁶ See D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts."

when Paul greets the brothers with Asynkritis, Phlegon, Patrobas and Hermas, it is impossible to tell whether he greets a house church or a group of missionaries; it is not even impossible that all are relatives, though this seems less likely in the context. Timothy can be a particularly helpful figure in understanding the scope of the title. Wayne Meeks identifies Timothy's role as that of a junior partner who may at some point become a senior partner in the mission; he refers to this role under the title *synergos*.⁵⁷ But in fact Timothy is as frequently and as formally referred to as brother. It seems probable that the role that he fulfills is the role that is frequently allotted to the sister-wife. This is not to say that the word *adelphē/adelphos* always implies the subordinate member of a pair. Again, it is important to recall the fluid nature of the missionary terminology. In the Gospel of John, both Martha and Mary are spoken of as *adelphe*, and neither is given a subordinate role.

These three features of the narratives put a new perspective on the common tradition they represent. Behind the stories in Luke and John lies a tradition about a famous missionary couple, Martha, the *diakonos*, and Mary, the *adelphe*. The references to Martha's house suggest that the women also gave hospitality and leadership to a house church. Investigation of these traditions has tended to see them as evidence for the life of Jesus. While it is possible that some memory of these women goes back to the lifetime of Jesus, these major common features of the tradition seem to suggest rather the functioning of the early Christian mission than memories of Jesus' lifetime.

The names Martha and Mary make it probable that these women had a background in Judaism; their connection with Jesus in the tradition suggests that they originated in Judea or Galilee. Although they seem to have functioned in the early Christian mission, there is no evidence that they were connected with Rome (as there is for Tryphaena and Tryphosa and, more remotely, for Evodia and Syntyche). While ethnic and local custom on the one hand and the imperial ethos on the other probably functioned in women's participation in the mission and relationships to each other, it is very difficult to delineate their respective roles.

The analogy with the recut funerary relief is even more relevant to the narratives about Martha and Mary than to the references to Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Evodia and Syntyche. Attempting to look at the relationship between Martha and Mary behind the texts is the equivalent of trying to read a palimpsest; the evidence that we are seeking has been erased and written over. The stories that Luke and John offer about these women are put at the service of the purposes and concerns of the two gospels and the portraits of the two women are accordingly modified. Luke's story exploits an

⁵⁷ Meeks, 133–34.

unequal definition of the roles of *diakonos* and *adelphē* into a tension between the two women.⁵⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza sees in Luke's version not only the author's desire to subordinate women in church ministries but also a struggle over the separation and status of the ministries of word and table.⁵⁹ The literary structure of Luke has also exerted influence on the telling of the story, as has this author's preference for silent women.⁶⁰ In John, the more fluid and egalitarian conceptions of community and ministry allow a more equal treatment of the women, but there too the stories serve the purposes of the gospel.⁶¹ In the history of interpretation, the two women have been overshadowed by the person of Lazarus in John 11; Mary's role in the anointing of Jesus in John 12:1–8 has been obscured by the conflation of this story with the sinful woman of Luke 7:35–50 and Mary's identification with Mary Magdalene.

Revising Sexual Arrangements in the Early Christian Mission

Thus the references to Mary and Martha, Syntyche and Evodia, and Tryphaena and Tryphosa can best be explained as reflecting partnerships of women missionaries in the early Christian mission. The question of the meaning of these relationships remains. Perhaps the best place to look for an answer is in the social realities that produced the funerary portrait and that also functioned in the early Christian mission. The early Christian movement has generally been supposed to have included a large number of freedpersons. It has not been possible to verify this supposition. Wayne Meek's prosopography of the Pauline communities suggests rather than establishes the status of freedperson for a variety of the figures he discusses but the status of the freedperson is in some ways emblematic for the members of these earliest urban communities. Meeks views the figures named in the letters as characterized by "high status inconsistency . . . their achieved status is higher than their attributed status." He also draws attention to the geographical mobility of the missionaries that was a source of adventure and achievement and of disruption in their lives.⁶²

Like slavery and emancipation, the early Christian mission was a context that made it both possible and necessary to remake the family. The early Christian movement frequently dislocated its members from the patriarchal

⁵⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza also suggests that Luke has created this tension, "Martha and Mary," 28–29.

⁵⁹ *In Memory of Her*, 164–67; "Martha and Mary," 30.

⁶⁰ See also Schüssler Fiorenza, "Martha and Mary," 29.

⁶¹ See Mary R. D'Angelo, "Images of Jesus and the Christian Call in the Gospels of Luke and John," *Spirituality Today* (Fall 1985): 196–212; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 327–33; R. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 183–98.

⁶² Meeks, 51–73; see especially 57, 63–64; 73; also 21–23; 16–19, 191, 57, 109–110.

family and substituted itself.⁶³ Conversely it was able to offer a new location to those who had already suffered the disruption of their social and emotional ties through other means (such as slavery and emancipation or immigration). Its structures and terminology, like the house-church and the titles "brother/sister" extended or replaced the family. And early Christian communities restructured the sexual arrangements of antiquity: marriage, its meanings, socially established substitutes like concubinage and contubernium (a liaison involving a slave) and even gender roles themselves had to be rethought and reintegrated into the new valuation of life.⁶⁴ This restructuring did not proceed from a coherent theoretical base and can hardly be said to have been planned, but it was in some degree consciously effected.⁶⁵ Slogans like "no 'male and female'" (Gal. 3:28) and "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor. 7:1) were shared by Paul and the communities with which he corresponded, and were realized not only in sexual asceticism but also in at least the permission to reject marriage for the sake of the mission (1 Cor. 7:32–35).⁶⁶

But the first century was a period in which the Augustan and post-Augustan reforms of the family sought both to strengthen and to refocus the patriarchal family around the husband and wife relationship, especially around the dominance of the husband.⁶⁷ Although these laws directly affected only Roman citizens, they embodied the imperial ethos.⁶⁸ The social climate they expressed and reinforced would have contributed to the social need for a substitute for the family, like the mutual commitments of the *conliberti* of the reliefs and the missionary pairs and familial language of the early Christian mission. In closing his study of the first urban Christians, Meeks suggests that, in the rigid imperial social milieu, the pressures

⁶³ See for example Mark 3:31–35 and parallels. See also Gerd Thiessen, *The Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, esp. 11–12. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 161–204. In John, both women are designated sister (11:1, 28).

⁶⁴ On these distinctions of relationships, see Gardner, 31–65, 213–18.

⁶⁵ See Ross Kraemer's *Gender, Culture, and Cosmology: Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁶⁶ On the meaning of these slogans, see D'Angelo, "No 'Male and Female'": *Gen. 1:27 in Gal. 3:28* (Dept. of Religious Studies, Villanova University, 1986 unpublished); also Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 203–41.

⁶⁷ See D'Angelo, "Remarriage and the Divorce Sayings Attributed to Jesus," in *Divorce and Remarriage*, ed. William B. Roberts (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1990); Sara Pomeroy, "The Relationship of the Married Woman to Her Blood Relatives in Rome," *Ancient Society* 7 (1976): 224–26. Peter Brown assumes the relative unimportance of the wife in marital relationships during the early empire. See "Late Antiquity: The 'Wellborn' Few," in *A History of Private Life*, 247–48.

⁶⁸ See also Ross Kraemer, "Monastic Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Egypt: Philo Judaeus on the Therapeutrides and Therapeutidae," in *Working Together in the Middle Ages: Perspectives on Women's Communities*, ed. Judith M. Bennet, Elizabeth A. Clark and Sarah Westphal-Wihl, special issue, *Signs* 14 (1989): 357.

exerted by the status inconsistency and the geographical mobility of the early Christian missionaries would have generated both anxiety and loneliness. He asks whether the movement's familial ethos would have provided a particularly welcome refuge, and stresses that the early Christian symbols proclaimed "change grounded in tradition."⁶⁹ Thus Paul himself had chosen celibacy for the mission, but in enacting that choice he had a succession of male companions as his partners in the mission. The renunciation of sexual activity enabled Paul and others to share their lives with their "brothers," "sisters" and "children" in the mission.⁷⁰

Women like Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Evodia and Syntyche and Martha and Mary must have experienced a wide variety of social risks as the concomitant of their achievements. Meeks regards the financial independence and religious activity of women as instances of status inconsistency.⁷¹ As missionaries they may have traveled extensively, and women suffered enhanced difficulties in travel. If Martha and Mary are seen as missionaries in the early Christian mission, they may also have experienced the dislocation of Jews in a Gentile milieu. While the names of the other four women do not reveal it, they may have shared this experience, or have otherwise experienced themselves as ethnically different and disadvantaged.⁷² If Tryphaena and Tryphosa were *conlibertae*, they underwent the social dispossession of slavery and the status change of emancipation. For such women, partnership in the mission would have consecrated female friendship as a means to supply the support, protection and intimacy lost in the disruption of familial bonds and the rejection of marriage.⁷³ In this context, the choice of women to work and live together rather than with a man emerges as a sexual as well as a social choice.⁷⁴

Thus participation in the early Christian mission may have enabled women to choose each other's companionship. But this does not imply an unambiguous approval of women's love for each other. Indeed, the choice must have exposed such women to a whole new range of ambiguities. The same climate that demanded new forms of partnership raised problems for the new sexual arrangements of the early Christian movement, and caused

⁶⁹ Meeks, 191.

⁷⁰ Faderman also points out that passionate friendships among women (and men) were approved and indeed highly lauded by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century society when they were assumed not to involve sexual activity.

⁷¹ Meeks, 23–25, 71, 191.

⁷² Meeks suggests that Evodia and Syntyche may have been metics in the *colonia* at Philippi (57).

⁷³ Lillian Faderman has pointed out that associations with other women played a major role in providing nurturing and support in the lives of women "who live by their brains" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 178–230.

⁷⁴ See Janice G. Raymond, *A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Friendship* (Boston: Beacon, 1986).

its proponents to insist the more strenuously that sexual propriety not be endangered. So while Paul approves and indeed advises celibacy for the unmarried and widows, he proposes marriage in 1 Cor. 7:1 as a remedy for "immoralities" and insists that marriages not be dissolved for the sake of faith by the believing partner (1 Cor. 7:8–16). Bernadette Brooten has shown that Rom. 1:26–27 expresses Paul's concurrence in imperial society's abhorrence of female homoeroticism. She traces the invective heaped upon women who were known to be lovers of women and suggests that the definitive issue in these responses may be the perception that the women in question were transgressing sexual bounds by taking on a male role. That is, the issue is female autonomy. She further suggests that Paul's promotion of celibacy, including female celibacy, may have made him more insistent upon sexual differentiation in dress and more hostile to explicitly sexual acts of homoeroticism.⁷⁵ Perhaps the vehemence of Paul's condemnation of female and male homoeroticism in Rom. 1:26–27 is in part apologetic, arising from the need to defend the early Christian mission's practice of missionary couples, including both his own practice and the women attested in Rom. 16:12 and Phil. 4:1–2.⁷⁶ Like female leadership in the early Christian mission, the practice raised the spectre of the unnatural woman who plays the role of the man.⁷⁷

Women who were partners in a missionary couple must be said to have been living the "double life" Rich describes as the other side of the lesbian continuum.⁷⁸ In realizing their commitment to the Christian mission and to each other, they would have been constrained both to emphasize the female character of their alliance and to apologize for it. One or both would certainly be liable to be seen as acting like a man. Yet antiquity endorsed and indeed glorified friendship between members of the same sex. From the Greek sources of Cicero's *De amicitia* to Augustine's *Confessions*, the love and companionship of a man's friend mediated philosophy and the higher life. And it was virtuous also for a woman to be in the company of women. Martial's anti-lesbian epigram against Bassa complains that he had once thought her virtuous because she was associated with other women and never with men.⁷⁹ The condemnation is for her sexual activities, not for her relationships. The same is true with Paul; he condemns those "who not only do such things but also approve those who do them" (Rom. 1:32), but uses the language of deep affection for his colleagues as well as his congregations.

⁷⁵ "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women," 71–72, 75–78.

⁷⁶ One is reminded here of Jeanette Marks's remarks on the dangers of female friendship. See Faderman, 229–30.

⁷⁷ For the horrors of this phenomenon, see Philo, *de spec. leg.* 3.37–39, *Abr.* 133–39, *Vita cont.* 59–63; and Brooten, "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women," 72–78.

⁷⁸ Rich, 67.

⁷⁹ *Epigrammata* 1.90. See also Brooten, "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women," 67.

The rigid control of the flesh that so preoccupied antiquity and Christianity enabled this duality.⁸⁰ But it also manifests the tradition's deep inability adequately to value either women (so long and so widely identified with the flesh) or any incarnation of eros.⁸¹ The New Testament provides neither blessings nor models for women's mutual commitments, but only mutilated relics. As Rich makes clear, the past can supply memories of women's autonomy and love for each other, but not a social ideal for women.⁸²

Conclusion

In this essay, I have examined figures from the early Christian mission from a perspective that has hitherto been ignored: from the perspective of commitments between and among women. What I have been able to uncover is the participation of women in the early Christian practice of missionary couples. This practice gave women the opportunity to share their lives in the Christian mission in relationships that were parallel to those of husband and wife missionaries, or to those of Paul and his companions. Like the relief of Helena and Eleusis, the early Christian sources give no evidence about erotic practice.

The few instances I have examined must be regarded as the tip of a very deeply submerged iceberg. Many other areas of early Christian history might be explored from this perspective. Research into women's communities is one area that has received some attention.⁸³ Relationships between individual women have received almost none. Tryphaena's sponsorship of Thecla in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* has been noted as evidence of that work's origin in groups of ascetic women.⁸⁴ But the tie between Perpetua and Felicity that caused slave and mistress to be martyred together deserves more attention. The Apocryphal Acts also provide noblewomen with women companions who join their commitment. Artemilla is paired with the freed-

⁸⁰ See Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988).

⁸¹ See D'Angelo, "Remarriage and the Divorce Sayings attributed to Jesus," 100–102.

⁸² Rich, 73–74.

⁸³ See especially *Signs* 14, no. 2 (1989); also Judith M. Bennet, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean O'Barr, B. Anne Valin and Sarah Westphal-Wihl, eds., *Sisters and Workers*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Peter Brown, "Daughters of Jerusalem: the Ascetic Life of Women in the Fourth Century," in *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 259–84.

⁸⁴ Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Apostles and the Legend: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 19–20, 35–7; Stevan Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 105–9; Virginia Burrus, "Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts," *Semeia* 38 (1986): 101–17.

woman Eubula in the *Acts of Paul* 7, Maximilla with Iphidamia in the *Acts of Andrew*, Mygdonia with Marcia, her nurse, and Tertia, her kinswoman in the *Acts of Thomas* 119–121, 134–38, 150–59.⁸⁵ This pattern of companionship may have played a role in the attraction of antique women to ascetic Christianity by responding to their social and emotional needs.⁸⁶ The association between Asenath and her attendant virgins presents a point at which a Jewish text offers a similar connection.⁸⁷ It may be that there are other female worlds of love and ritual to be discovered in late antiquity, but only looking will find them there.

⁸⁵ E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* II (London: SCM, 1974), 369–74 (Acts of Paul); 401 no. 1, 402, 409, 414, 421 (Acts of Andrew); 507, 511, 513–515, 522–526 (Acts of Thomas).

⁸⁶ See Ross Kraemer, "The Conversion of Women to Ascetic Forms of Christianity," *Signs* 5 (1980), 298–307 reprinted in *Sisters and Workers*. Friendships with ascetic men also helped provide for such women, at least in the fourth and fifth centuries. See Elizabeth Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations*, Studies in Women and Religion 1 (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1979). Rosemary Rader, *Breaking Boundaries: Male/Female Friendship in Early Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist, 1983).

⁸⁷ *Joseph and Asenath* 2.6. See also see Susan Doty, *From Ivory Tower to City of Refuge in Joseph and Asenath and Related Narratives* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Denver—Illiff School of Theology, 1989).



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MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES: THE STATUS OF ACTRESSES IN EARLY CHRISTIAN SOCIETY*

BY

DOROTHEA R. FRENCH

Recent studies on the Christianization of the Roman Empire have shed important light upon the conversion of such groups as the educated elite and women.¹ There has been, however, little scholarship devoted to the impact of Christianity upon the lower classes.² This study makes a contribution toward that broader field of scholarship by examining the social and legal status of actresses who were near the bottom of the social scale. Did the Christian concept of baptism as a ritual which completely washed away a person's past have a significant impact on improving the social and legal status of actresses in late antiquity? One of the most important signifiers of the measure of both classical and Christian attitudes toward actresses is the marriage codes because the law clearly draws the boundary

* I would like to thank Elizabeth Clark and Susan Ashbrook Harvey for reading an earlier draft of this article and offering valuable suggestions.

¹ See especially Peter Brown, *Power and persuasion in late antiquity: towards a Christian empire* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992) and M.K. Hopkins, "Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire," *Past and Present* 32 (1965), 12-26 on the educated elite. Among the numerous studies on women see: Antti Arjava, "Women in the Christian Empire: Ideological Change and Social Reality," *StPatr* 24 (1991), 6-9; Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, A.D. 350-450* (London: Routledge, 1995); Averil Cameron, "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire," in Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler, and Maria Wyke, eds., *Women in Ancient Societies: "An illusion of the night"* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Elizabeth A. Clark, "Sexual Politics in the Writings of John Chrysostom," *Anglican Theological Review* 49 (1977), 3-20; Judith Herrin, "Public and Private Forms of Religious Commitment among Byzantine Women," in *Women in Ancient Societies*, 181-196; and Frederick C. Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism," *CH* 49 (1980), 251-261.

² See the pioneering study of P.R.C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A social study of the emperor's freedmen and slaves* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972); and T.M. Finn, "Social Mobility, Imperial Civil Service and the Spread of Early Christianity," *StPatr* 17:1 (1982), 31-35.

line between who is accepted and who is excluded in society. Beginning in the first century actresses were classed as infamous persons and thus prohibited from contracting a marriage with a freeborn person. Did the marriage of Theodora, a former actress, to Justinian in 524 C.E. offer women of the stage an unprecedented opportunity to improve their legal and social status in early Byzantine society as some scholars have assumed?³ By examining a wide spectrum of sources, including marriage codes from the first through sixth centuries, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the Lives of actress/prostitutes this study concludes that the majority of actresses in early Byzantine society suffered the same negative social and legal prejudices they had since the time of Augustus.

Theatrical performances, *ludi scaenici*, were an integral part of the public spectacles which characterized Roman civic life.⁴ The games and their attendant rituals were impressive religious and ceremonial occasions that helped to reaffirm the existing order by forging a bond between the emperor, the leading men of the empire, and the inhabitants of the cities.⁵ While the games in general helped to support the existing political and cosmic order, the theatre itself served as a vehicle for the inculcation of classical culture and values. It was largely from the theatre that the common folk learned mythology.⁶ The most popular theatrical performances of the imperial period were pantomimes, farces, and mimes. The principal form of comedy was the mime whose subject matter came from every day urban life as well as myths. Virtually all of the theatrical conventions of the early drama disappeared in the mimes. Actresses, *mimae*, now played the female roles. Discarding the traditional masks and costumes that had been an integral part of the theatre from its origins, performers wore the contem-

³ A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: an Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), 395.

⁴ J.P.D.V. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure at Rome* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 267-68; Paul Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque* (Paris: Seuil, 1976) 15; Claude Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au bas empire* (2 vols.; Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1979), 1.210, 299; S.R.F. Price, *Ritual and Power: The Roman imperial court in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101, 127-128; and Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1st ed.; London: Duckworth, 1977), 39.

⁵ Price, *Ritual* and Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 193-196 discuss the role that ritual plays in legitimating the political order.

⁶ Blake Leyerle, *Ascetic Pantomime: John Chrysostom Against Spiritual Marriage* (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1991), 47. See also Minos Kokolakis, "Pantomimus and the Treatise περὶ Ὀρχήσεως," *Platon* 10-11 (1958-59), 21.

porary dress of the towns where they performed.⁷ While the mimes and pantomimes were crowd pleasers, there were among the conservative educated elite those, like Seneca, whose Stoic attitudes led them to condemn the performances as grossly degenerate art forms. These men bewailed the fact that people who attended the *ludi scaenici* absorbed all that was inferior and degraded.⁸

The acting profession was made up of people who sprang from the full spectrum of Roman society—from the upper echelons of the senatorial class, free born persons, freedmen and women, and slaves.⁹ It was not uncommon for Roman nobles, including the emperor himself, to own their own personal theatrical troop of slaves. There were even a few illustrious stage performers who traveled with large entourages including their privately owned theatrical troop of slaves. These troops might perform for the select entertainment of their owners or be rented out for festive events—including the public spectacles.¹⁰ Other troops, composed of free-born and/or freedmen stage artists, formed theatrical guilds and in this capacity negotiated performance contracts with individuals and cities. Some acting guilds established special relations with rulers who became their patrons. These troops often held guild meetings and banquets in the temples dedicated to state gods.¹¹

⁷ Margaret Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (2d ed. rev.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 422; Joan Liversidge, *Everyday Life in the Roman Empire* (London: B.T. Botsford, 1976), 95; Ludwig Friedlaender, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire* (trans. J. Freese and L. Magnus; 4 vols.; New York: Barnes & Nobel, 1968), 2. 100.

⁸ Lucian *De salt.* 2-3; See Dorothea French, *Christian Emperors and Pagan Spectacles: The Secularization of the Ludi A.D. 382-525* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985). See also Leyerle, "Ascetic Pantomimes," 80-81.

⁹ Digest 23.2.47 Paul, *Lex Julia et Papia*, book 2 states that a senator's daughter who has been a prostitute or an actress or convicted of a criminal offense can safely marry a freedman, because a woman who has behaved so disgracefully has no honor left. "*Senatoris filia, quae corpore quaestum uel artem ludicram fecerit aut iudicio publico damnata fuerit, impune libertino nubit: nec enim honos ei seruatur, quae se in tantum foedus deduxit.*"

¹⁰ Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 7.24.1-5 says that Ummidia Quadratilla, an elderly patrician widow of independent means, kept a troupe of pantomime actors whom she treated with an indulgence unsuitable in a lady of her high position. The troop performed privately in her home and in the public theatre. See Allardyce Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes and Miracles: Studies in the Popular Theatre* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1963), 98-99; 108-09 for other examples.

¹¹ The most well known is the Artists of Dionysius. See E.J. Jory, "Associations of Actors in Rome," *Hermes* 98 (1970), 244-53 and Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *The*

Thus within the acting community there was a broad spectrum of theatrical performers from slave to free-born, from second-rate to the widely acclaimed and celebrated super stars. Some male performers benefited socially from their popularity by receiving appointments to civic priesthoods thereby gaining the right to offer public spectacles themselves in honor of the emperor. A few even made their way into the imperial household.¹² Beautiful and talented actresses not only acquired great personal wealth, they became trend-setters for Roman matrons who imitated the clothing, makeup and mannerism of the best known stage personalities. A good example of such public adulation is the actress Cytheris, paramour of Marc Anthony, who went about carried in an open litter preceded by laurel-crowned lictors, enjoying the attention of civic officials who hurried out to greet her whenever she approached a town. The council and people of Taormina, Sicily, erected a funeral stele in honor of another actress, the "radiant Julia Bassilla," praising her for "her art, her virtue, and her wisdom."¹³ Official civic honors of this sort and a general public adulation obscure the reality of the sorry legal position of the acting profession in Roman society.

Actresses, particularly the most celebrated, were simultaneously lionized for their talent and beauty, and looked down upon in status conscious Roman society because of the legal disdain in which their profession was held. According to Roman law actresses were classed with prostitutes as *humiles abiectaeque personae* as it was assumed that both prostitutes and actresses earned money by selling sexual favors.¹⁴ The cultural construct of the actress as a seductress assumed that to act was a form of prostitution, a selling

Dramatic Festivals of Athens (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 304-5. Pickard-Cambridge cites *Oxyrh. Pap.* 2476, p. 171 (289 C.E.) in which Aurelius Hatres, the high priest of the Artists of Dionysius, sends a notice to the emperor advising him of the good will and honor in which the ruler was held, and reminding him of the "exemption from taxes and liturgies" which Aurelius was entitled by virtue of this position.

¹² LS 5186. Pylades, the greatest pantomime of his time was honored by the people of Puteoli for his generous games. The right to give these *munera* had been granted by Commodius Pius Felix Augustus. See A. Müller, "Die Parasiti Apollinis," *Philologus* 63 (1904), 342-361.

¹³ Georgius Kaibel, ed., *Inscriptiones Italiae et Siciliae*, vol. 14 *Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berolini Apud Georgium Reimerum, 1890), 1091. "Τὴν ἐπὶ πάσῃ ἀρετῇ σωφροσύνη τε καὶ σοφίᾳ διατρέπουσαν Ἰαλλίαν Βασσιανή[v] vel Βάσιλλ[αν] Βουλῇ] καὶ δῆμος τῆς λαμπρᾶς π[όλεως] Ταυρομενεῖων ἀνέ[στη]σεν τὴν λαμπροτάτην."

¹⁴ Digest 23.2.44; Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law & Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 129, 246-247; Balsdon, *Life*, 280.

of the self in a desire to seduce the audience. No doubt the public forum also provided women who were so inclined with the opportunity to solicit customers.¹⁵ There was an important legal distinction, however, between prostitutes who earned their entire income from selling their bodies and actresses whose principle source of income came from appearing on the stage and only secondarily from prostitution. Actresses suffered less social and legal stigma than prostitutes. Nevertheless, women in both professions shared a condition of permanent degradation. According to Roman law some conditions were inherent (permanent degradation) and other conditions were not. Certain occupations, such as acting and prostitution, rendered the people engaged in them permanently infamous. Even if they left their profession women retained this legal ignominy.¹⁶ The rationale behind the law was that people engaged in these occupations had an inferiority of character so inherent that it never could be lessened and could, moreover, even be transmitted to their offspring.¹⁷ The appeal of the theatrical profession, however, was attractive enough that freeborn men and women, including women from the senatorial class, willingly chose a career in the theatre despite the legal and social implications for themselves and their offspring.¹⁸

It may have been in an effort to restore the luster to patrician families that Augustus's family legislation of 9 C.E., *leges Iulia et Papia Poppaea*, codified social custom by explicitly forbidding all free-born persons, including senators, from marrying infamous persons or their offspring. The law specifically

¹⁵ Mary Louise Roberts, "Acting Up: The Feminist Theatrics of Marguerite Durant," *French Historical Studies* 19:4 (Fall 1996), 110.

¹⁶ See David Daube, "The Marriage of Justinian and Theodora. Legal and Theological Reflections," *Catholic University Law Review* 16 (1967), 383 who notes that Caligula's tax on all harlots, whether active or retired, was based on the assumption that the character of a prostitute does not change even after she retires.

¹⁷ For example with regard to prostitution Digest 23.2.43.1 Ulpian states that the law brands with *infamia* not just the woman who practices prostitution but also anyone who has done so in the past, even though she no longer behaves in this way; the disgrace is not removed by stopping the behaviour. Daube, "Marriage," 381-383.

¹⁸ Digest 23.2.44.6-7 explicitly addresses the fate of freeborn women who become associated with the stage after their marriage. Digest 23.2.44.6 says that if either the father or mother of a freeborn woman begins to practice the profession of the stage after their daughter has contracted a marriage she would not be repudiated by her husband. However, according to Digest 23.2.44.7, if a married woman chose to appear on stage after her marriage her husband should repudiate her. These ruling suggest that freeborn men and women had the freedom to choose the theatrical profession, a profession moreover that had serious legal consequences for themselves and their offspring.

prohibited a senator, his son, or his grandson, or his great-grandson by his son from marriage with a freedwoman, or a woman who is or has been an actress or whose father or mother are or have been actors (*quae ipsa cuiusue pater materue artem ludicram facit fecerit*). Similarly the daughter of a senator, his granddaughter by his son, or great-granddaughter by his grandson was forbidden to marry a man who is or has been an actor or whose father or mother is or has been an actor.¹⁹ Since according to Roman practice one of the primary functions of marriage was the production of legitimate children, Roman legal discussion of marriage often focuses on the question of the status of children. The prohibition against marriage with actors and actresses also forbids marriage with their offspring since they inherited their mother's status. Unless both parents were full Roman citizens enjoying the rights of formal Roman marriage, and linked in such a marriage, the children of such a union would follow the status of the mother.²⁰ Any children issuing from a union between an actress and a patrician would be illegitimate, *iniusti*, since the union would be void at law. The offspring were not *in patria potestate* and had no rights of intestate succession to their father.²¹ Throughout the empire laws continued to reiterate the Roman social ideal of maintaining the exclusive legal and social position of the senatorial class by prohibiting marriage with theatrical performers, or offering them the protection of the status of concubine.²² The reiteration of Augustus's marriage prohibitions from the first century through the time of Justinian, when they were included in his codification of Roman law, suggests both the continuity of the Augustan family ideal in law and the difficulty of enforcing it throughout the empire.

There is often a discrepancy between social practice and legal idealism

¹⁹ Augustus's first great piece of legislation was the *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 B.C.E. It was followed by the *Lex Papia Poppaea* in 9 C.E. The law as it stood from that date is generally cited as the Julian and Papian Law. Digest 23.2.44 Paul (*Lex Julia et Papia*, book 1). Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 82. Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 60.

²⁰ P.R.C. Weaver, "Children of Freedmen (and Freedwomen)," in Beryl Rawson, ed., *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 174.

²¹ Dixon, *Family*, 91.

²² David I. Kertzer, "The Role of Ritual in Political Change," in Myron J. Aronoff, ed., *Culture and Political Change* vol. 1 *Political Anthropology Yearbook* (2 vols., New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983), 58. He notes that the more privileged the position enjoyed by a group, the more eager it will be to exclude people from less privileged positions from its ranks.

particularly in the realm of sex and gender where the norms of practice and the norms of ideology typically operate in a state of conflict, ambiguity and tension. There was no single Roman attitude toward adultery, sexuality or women, or even a uniform attitude of the Roman elite toward these matters. The sources reflect the complexity of the conceptualizations of sexuality among individuals and even within some individuals in different contexts.²³ The reiteration of marriage laws prohibiting actresses or their daughters from marrying into the senatorial class suggest that at least some members of the social elite were perfectly willing to overlook an actress's legal inferiority, particularly if she was extraordinarily talented or lovely, and offer her the respectability of marriage or concubinage. It would be less scandalous perhaps if she herself had never appeared on the stage but had been born to parents from a patrician or freeborn family which had chosen a theatrical career. Nevertheless she shared her family's legal infamy even if she sprang from a notable theatrical clan. There is nothing in the sources to suggest, however, that such marriage alliances were commonplace since they represented a dramatic breach in traditional Mediterranean social ideals which placed a high premium on the chastity of wives. A virtuous woman would bring honor to a family. In a society where female chastity was judged according to a politics of reputation, a woman's private sexual conduct rested on inferences from her public behavior.²⁴ In contrast it would be presumed that the sexual and reproductive potential of a woman of the stage, whose bodily charms had been the object of the male gaze and the focus of public discussion, would not belong exclusively to her husband.²⁵ Indeed the law specifically states that chastity was expected only of those women who were in a lawful relationship and as such counted as matrons.²⁶

As inheritors of Stoic ethical attitudes and Roman social and legal prejudice against theatrical performers, early Christian leaders wrestled with the problem of permitting actors and actresses to convert and join the community of believers. Men like Cyprian were particularly sensitive to preserving boundaries and markers of the Christian community which were more strict than those of Roman society. If marriage with theatrical performers

²³ David Cohen, "The Augustan Law on Adultery: The Social and Cultural Context," in David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller, eds., *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 112, 122-123.

²⁴ Cohen, "Adultery," 113.

²⁵ Cohen, "Adultery," 112.

²⁶ C.J. 9.9.28 (Constantius, 326 C.E.).

would contaminate the blood of the senatorial class, how much more would the admission of people of infamous status to the Christian community pollute that body? In reply to a question posed to him about the permissibility of an actor communicating with the congregation of Thena, Cyprian replied that theatrical performers could not be baptized unless they left their profession. He argued that the respect and honor of the church would be defiled by the base and infamous contamination, *turpi et infami contagione*, of an actor. The bishop was not impressed by the fact that the man had already left the stage and was supporting himself by teaching acting. According to Cyprian the actor ought to be rescued from his depravity and shame, *pravitate et dedecore*. By teaching others how to act he was substituting proxies, *vicarios*, to appear for himself, and was instructing them in a shameless art which was contrary to the plan of God. If it became necessary, said the bishop, the man ought to be supported with offerings from the congregation.²⁷ Cyprian's attitude reflects the continuity of the cultural and legal prejudice of a small group of the educated elite against the stage and everything connected with it.

However his views also illustrate the fundamental difference in the attitude of Roman society and the Christian community. Like followers of Stoic philosophy Christian leaders saw the theatre as morally corrupt, but unlike Roman jurists they did not see theatrical performers themselves as permanently degraded. This radical attitude toward the status of theatrical performers rested upon the belief that Christian baptism was a symbolic death and rebirth which stripped away the permanent degradation attached to actors and actresses.²⁸ They, like all Christians, were now "neither Jew nor Greek . . . slave nor free . . . male nor female . . . but one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:27-28)²⁹ Christianity offered spiritual redemption for those people whose former connection with the theatre continued to render them legally ignoble within the wider Roman society. Cyprian's objections to the actor rested not on his ignoble status but on his connection with an idolatrous institution.

²⁷ Cyprian, *Ep.* 61 to Eucratius, Bishop of Thena. J.-P. Migne, PL 8, 362-363. See also *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, translated and annotated by G.W. Clarke (New York: Newman Press, 1984), 53.

²⁸ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 155. See also Jack P. Lewis, "Baptismal Practices of the Second and Third Century Church," *Restoration Quarterly* 26 no. 1 (1983), 4-5.

²⁹ See especially Peter Brown, *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 49-50.

The rite of baptism itself contained a contract of renunciation which illustrates the church's fundamentally negative attitude toward the theatre itself. Priests required catechumens to repeat the phrase, "I renounce thee, Satan, thy pomps, thy service, and thy works . . . and I enter into thy service, O Christ."³⁰ From the second century onward the Fathers of the Church had interpreted this phrase to mean the renunciation of the public spectacles and their *pompae*, the processions of civic deities. "When we enter the water and profess the Christian faith in terms prescribed by its law," writes Tertullian "we profess with our mouths that we have renounced the devil, his pomp and his angels (*renuntiassse nos diabolo et pompae et angelis eius*). . . . So if it shall be established that the whole equipment of the public shows is idolatry pure and simple, we have an indubitable decision laid down in advance, that this profession of renunciation made in baptism touches the public shows too, since they are serving the devil, his pomp and angels, namely by way of idolatry." (*Igitur si ex idololatria uniuersam spectaculorum paraturam constare constiterit, indubitate praeiudicatum erit et iam ad spectacula pertinere renuntiationis nostrae testimonium in lauacro, quae diabolo et pompae et angelis eius sint mancipata, scilicet per idololatriam.*)³¹ The fact that Tertullian had to point out the idolatrous nature of the games to catechumens suggests, as have recent ritual studies, that the symbols and rituals associated with public ceremonies provided a wide latitude of interpretation for participants.³²

While symbolism is important in uniting disparate groups, "most symbolic action, even the basic symbols of a community's ritual life, can be very unclear to participants or interpreted by them in very dissimilar ways."³³ The lack of clarity is apparent in the conflicting attitudes toward the public spectacles within the Christian community. Tertullian and the more ascetically minded Fathers viewed everything connected with the theatre as idolatrous. However, the silent majority of Christians saw the public

³⁰ Antoine Wenger, A.A., *Jean Chrysostome: Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, vol. 50 Sources Crétiennes (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1957) 2.20-21. "Ἀποτάσσομαί σοι, Σατανᾶ, καὶ τῇ πομπῇ σου καὶ τῇ λατρείᾳ σου καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις σου." See also *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, Trans. Paul W. Harkins (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), 2.20-21, 11.25.

³¹ Tertullian *de Spect.*, 4.1 [*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Vol. I (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954) p. 231]. See also *Tertullian: Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works*, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., Sister Emily Joseph Daly, C.S.J., Edwin A. Quain, S.J. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), 56-57 and *Apol.* 38.4.

³² Bell, *Ritual*, 183 and 191.

³³ Bell, *Ritual*, 183.

spectacles as an integral aspect of Roman society and part of their cultural heritage.³⁴ Some Christians from the leading class even held the office of *flamen*, an imperial priesthood requiring the holder to officiate over the public sacrifices associated with civic celebrations of the state gods. In reaction to this liberal attitude the canons of the Council of Elvira in A.D. 300 declared that those who were guilty of offering traditional sacrifices as part of their compulsory public service as *flamines* were to be excommunicated without hope of pardon, even on their deathbeds.³⁵

The willingness of Christians not only to attend the public spectacles but to preside over them reflects the degree to which many Christians, especially in the Greek world, viewed themselves no longer as a sect ranged against Roman civilization. On the contrary, by the third century they had reached an accommodation with Greek culture enabling them to assimilate pagan culture into a Christian framework. This new outlook, according to Peter Brown, was one of the most decisive changes within the Christian community since it facilitated the Christianization of Rome by enabling pagans and Christians to share a common cultural heritage.³⁶

Nevertheless, in spite of the widespread acceptance of the public spectacles by the majority of Christians, until the last quarter of the fourth century the church officially remained hostile to the games. John Chrysostom's instructions to baptismal candidates sound remarkably like Tertullian's when the former wrote: "Let us say these words, 'I renounce thee Satan,' knowing that we shall be called to account for them on that day of judgement. And the pomps of the devil are the theatres, the racecourses, every sinful observance of days, presages contained in chance utterances and omens."³⁷ Other leading figures in both the East and West, including Sozomen,

³⁴ Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 199), 27-30; Renee Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 226-228. Both Salzman and Markus recognize the danger in dividing late antique culture into pagan and Christian as did the Fathers. They continue, however, to follow the Durkheimian model of labeling public institutions and rituals as either religious or secular. In light of recent ritual studies which are challenging the traditional association of belief and ritual it may be more helpful to abandon this analytical model which the more uncompromising Fathers utilized.

³⁵ Lepelley, *Les cités*, 362.

³⁶ Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity A.D. 150-750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 82; Salzman, *Time*, 21.

³⁷ Chrysostom *Bapt. Inst.* 12.52 and 11.215. See also Leonel L. Mitchell, "The Baptismal Rite in Chrysostom," *Anglican Theological Review* 43 (1961), 399.

Gregory Nazianzen, Jacob of Sarugh, Ambrose, and Augustine roundly condemned the theatre. Major councils and decrees of the church repeatedly charged the faithful to abandon the theatre or face ecclesiastical sanction.³⁸

It was not only the public spectacles in general which came under attack by the Church Fathers. Actresses in particular became the object of vitriolic denunciations of the theatre by such stern moralists as Chrysostom. Actresses came to symbolize everything that was wrong with the theatre. Chrysostom's criticisms of actresses illustrates the continuity of the classical construct of a woman of the stage as a dangerous seductress—the very antithesis of a chaste Roman and Christian matron.³⁹ The vivid and detailed descriptions of her flowing tresses and khol-blackened eyes sparkling with charm as she sang audacious love songs and satirical couplets reveal a male aesthetic of the actress as an *object d'art* which is simultaneously desired and feared.⁴⁰ The audiences were filled with men from all social and economic backgrounds who would be willing to throw away familial and societal restraints in the competition to possess such an exquisitely tantalizing creature. According to Chrysostom the most talented women of the stage attracted large followings of love-struck admirers who squandered their family resources by showering the actresses with costly perfumes, jewels and other gifts.⁴¹ His denunciations reflect the underlying anxiety that actresses posed a real threat to the family in one way or another. It is not surprising that the church continued to demand that both actresses and actors leave the stage and all of its negative associations if they wanted to

³⁸ Marguerite Harl, "Le dénonciation des festivités profanes dans le discours épiscopal et monastique, en Orient Chrétien à la fin du IV^e siècle," in *La Fête pratique et discours: d'Alexandrie hellénistique à la Mission de Besançon* 262 *Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), 133. See Leyerle, "Ascetic Pantomimes," 51-52 for a full treatment of this subject.

³⁹ Peter Brown, "East and West: The New Marital Morality," in Paul Veyne, ed., *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 297-311.

⁴⁰ Roberts, "Acting Up," 1110. See also Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1989), 70.

⁴¹ Chrysostom Hom. 19 in *John*. PG 59, 1020; *Hom. contra ludos et theatra*, PG 56, 266, 267, 543; See also Georgios J. Theochardis, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Profantheaters im IV. und V. Jahrhundert, hauptsächlich auf grund der Predigten des Johannes Chrysostomos, Patriarchen von Konstantinople* (Thessaloniki: Druckerei M. Treantaphyllou, 1940), 69-70. Chrysostom's sermons are a continuity of earlier diatribes such as those of Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage directed against women's dress, makeup and jewelry by which they led men astray. See Averil Cameron, "Discourse of Female Desire," 153-156; and Cloke, *Female*, 28.

convert. Moreover, by this time the Christian community had adopted the Roman legal prejudice against marriage to actresses. Men who were married to former actresses were not eligible to become clergymen or to advance to the office of bishop.⁴²

By the end of the fourth century the unalterable opposition of the more ascetically minded Christian leaders to the public spectacles appears to have had a significant influence on late fourth century imperial policy toward the complex problem faced by those theatrical performers for whom acting was a compulsory public service.⁴³ Actors and actresses who fell into this category did not have the option of leaving the stage as the church continued to require. Acknowledging that a conflict existed between the imperial need for a steady supply of theatrical performers and church canons denying baptism to working actors and actresses, Christian emperors issued edicts setting forth the conditions under which theatrical performers might obtain permission to leave the stage in order to become baptized. While recognizing that doctrine was to be decided by ecclesiastical councils, Christian rulers controlled many ecclesiastical affairs as a part of general civil government. Therefore edicts addressing the conversion of theatrical performers were addressed to the praetorian prefects whose duty it was to enforce them.⁴⁴

⁴² By the early fourth century the influence of monasticism and the general exaltation of the ascetic life above the social, and of celibacy above the married state, together with the increasing sharpness of the distinction between clergy and laity, all tended toward the celibacy of the clergy. In the practice of clerical celibacy, however, the Greek and Latin churches diverged in the fourth century. The Greek church limited the injunction of celibacy to the higher clergy. In the East, one marriage was always allowed to the clergy, and at first even to bishops, and celibacy was left optional. Yet certain restrictions were early introduced, such as the prohibition of marriage after ordination, as well as of second marriage after baptism. Besides second marriage, the marrying of a concubine, a widow, a harlot, a slave, or an actress, was forbidden to the clergy. A man who was married to a woman from this category could not be advanced to the office of bishop. See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* vol. 3 Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1910), 242-250.

⁴³ In addition to slaves there were women of the lower class "*ex viliori sorte progenitae*" who were obligated to the compulsory performance of the spectacles "*spectaculorum debentur obsequiis*" as described in C.Th. 15.7.4 (380 C.E.). Similarly the daughter of theatrical parents who appeared to be living a vulgar life (*vulgarem vitam*) was obligated to appear on stage according to C.Th. 15.7.2 (371 C.E.). C.J. 5.27.1 (336 C.E.) applies to women of the stage whether they engaged in the profession by their own authority or because of an imperial rescript. See also Nicoll, *Masks*, 98-99; 108-109 and Jory, "Associations," 244-53.

⁴⁴ J.B. Bury, *History of the later Roman empire from the death of Theodosius I to the death of Justinian* (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565) (2 vols., New York: Dover), 2.360-62.

C.Th. 15.7.1 (371 C.E.) is the first rescript to address the issue of the baptism of actors and actresses. In it Viventius, prefect of the city, is admonished to make it possible for those performers who were *in extremis* to seek the sacrament of baptism. In acknowledgement of the church's position that baptism meant the renunciation of their profession, the edict stipulated that the prefect was to take utmost care to ensure that the theatrical performers were not feigning the gravity of their illness. Both ecclesiastical and secular officials were to be brought in to assess the situation. Stage artists were permitted to receive the sacraments on their deathbeds only with the bishop's approval. Requests for the sacraments, however, had to be reported immediately to the *judices*, or if they were absent, to the *curators* of the cities so that inspectors might be sent to investigate the legitimacy of the request.⁴⁵ Clearly theatrical performers were a resource that the emperors felt they could not squander, and it is apparent the prefect could not rely on the testimony of a bishop alone. In recognition of the church's teaching that actors and actresses must leave their profession after baptism, however, the edict states that those stage performers who survived would receive an imperial exemption from their obligatory public service to appear on stage.

The imperial edict reflects both widespread practice and the official ecclesiastical attitude toward baptism by the late fourth century. Most catechumens were unwilling to undergo baptism until they reached old age or were on their deathbeds.⁴⁶ Those who wished to undergo baptism before their deathbed looked upon conversion as the complete renunciation of one way of life and the adoption of another. For example, men such as Paulinus of Nola, and an impressive number of his circle of friends, gave up wealth and their military or civic careers for the rigors of monastic life after baptism.⁴⁷

The imperial rescript implying that *mimae* put off baptism until their deathbeds denied them the opportunity for both social and legal redemption. Because actresses were permanently infamous their baptism and adoption of a new way of life would not have altered their legal status within the wider Roman society. Therefore the terms of a new rescript C.Th. 15.7.4, promulgated in 380 C.E. and again in 381 in a slightly different format

⁴⁵ C.Th. 15.7.1 [371 or 367 C.E.].

⁴⁶ Brown, *Augustine*, 106-7. See also Lewis, "Baptismal," 14.

⁴⁷ *Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, trans. and annot. P.G. Walsh, Ancient Christian Writers: the works of the Fathers in translation, nos. 35-36 (2 vols., Westminster, Maryland: Newmann Press, 1966-67), 1.5.4.

as C.Th. 15.7.9, offered an unprecedented opportunity for converted actresses to become legally respectable. Under its terms actresses who wished to leave the stage in the name of Christianity, *consideratio sacratissimae religionis et Christianae legis reverentia*, could request a release from their compulsory public service. Furthermore this imperial grant removed all legal prejudice and stigma attached to the woman's former occupation. (*Illas etiam feminas liberas a contubernio scaenici praeiudicii durare praecipimus, quae Mansuetudinis nostrae beneficio, expertes muneris turpioris esse meruerunt.*) C.Th. 15.7.4 and 9 meant that actresses who converted now had the possibility of living for the first time free of legal and social ignominy within the wider Roman community, and implies the removal of all barriers to marriage which they had faced since Augustus's marriage laws.⁴⁸ The removal of all legal prejudice and stigma attached to the woman's former occupation was a Christian application of an imperial prerogative in effect since the late second century giving rulers the right to grant freedmen the opportunity to have all blemish of their servile origins erased. The legal concept was undoubtedly influenced by Stoic philosophy which taught that in a past golden age all men were born free. Under the terms of the grant of freebornship the individual was returned to his natural birthright, *natales restituere*. Such a person became legally a free person "as if he had never been a slave."⁴⁹ The rescripts of 380/381 C.E. relating to the conversion of actresses appear to suggest a Christian legal parallel with the case of slaves although there is no explicit suggestion that these women were granted the right of *natales restituere*.

The edicts exempting women from appearing on the stage are completely riveted on the social construct of the actress as a sexually promiscuous individual. Indeed the laws specifically refer to the profession as one of indecent character (*muneris turpioris*).⁵⁰ It is not surprising, therefore,

⁴⁸ See C.Th. 15.7.9 (381 C.E.) for virtually the same wording.

⁴⁹ Codex 6.8.2, 294 C.E. "*natalibus autem antiquis restituti liberti ingenui nostro beneficio constituuntur.*" The concept of a free state of all under natural law is repeatedly affirmed by the later classics. Institutes 1.2.2 states "For by natural law, at the beginning, all men were born free." (*iure enim naturali ab initio omnes homines liberi nascebantur.*) For a full discussion of the topic see David Daube, "Greek and Roman Reflections on Impossible Laws," *Natural Law Forum* 12 (1967), 61-70.

⁵⁰ C.Th. 15.7.4 and 9 "if they have obtained exemption from this compulsory public service of an indecent (*turpioris*) character by a special grant of imperial favor of Our Clemency." C.Th. 7.2 protects daughters of theatrical performers "provided that they so conduct themselves that they should be considered worthy persons (*ut probabiles habeantur*)." However, those who appear to have lived a vulgar life (*vulgarem vitam*) ought to be recalled to the theatre.

that another rescript from the same time (C.Th. 15.7.8 [381 C.E.]) stipulates that a woman of the stage (*scenae mulier*) who had received an imperial exemption on the basis of her Christianity must make a clean break with her earlier life. A former actress could lose her imperial exemption if she became sexually suspect—by becoming involved in indecent embraces (*turpibus volutata complexibus*), or if she remained a woman of the stage in spirit (*animo tamen scenica*.) The fate of such a relapsed woman was to be dragged back to the stage (*detracta in pulpitu*), there to remain forever without any hope of absolution. The loss of her imperial exemption could never be reversed even when she became a ridiculous old woman, unsightly through old age who had no choice but to be chaste (*donec anus ridicula, senectute deformis, nec tunc quidem absolutione potiatur, cum aliud quam casta esse non possit*).⁵¹ The converted actress then was expected to be a completely new creature who had left all of the immoral associations of her former life.

The wording of the edicts conjures up images of the two stock female characters of the mimical stage familiar to Roman theatre-goers: the beautiful young actress who played the leading female role and the comic old bawd—a hag-like woman whose disreputable past had left its devastating mark on her ravaged physical appearance and unpredictable temperament.⁵² The disturbing sensuality of the former stands in stark contrast to the ridiculous sexuality of the latter. The imperial exemption suggested that for actresses, like other converts in the late fourth century whose baptism signified a complete break with the past, conversion meant the renunciation of sexuality.⁵³

The conversion of a *mima* and her renunciation of the public spotlight for an ascetic life was possible for some women only after the publication of C.Th. 15.7.4. This edict provides the historical and political context for an anecdote in St. Chrysostom's homily 67 *On St. Matthew*. According to Chrysostom an unnamed actress had come to Antioch from a city in Phoenicia and a large number of men had already ruined themselves

⁵¹ C.Th. 15.7.8 (A.D. 381) "*Scaenae mulier si vacationem religionis nomine postularit, obtentu quidem petitionis venia ei non desit, verum si post, turpibus volutata complexibus, et religionem, quam expetierit, prodidisse et gerere, quod officio desiderat, animo tamen scaenica detegatur, retracta in pulpitu, sine spe absolutionis ullius ibi eo usque permaneat, donec anus ridicula, senectute deformis, nec tunc quidem absolutione potiatur, cum aliud quam casta esse non possit.*"

⁵² Nicole, *Masks*, 93.

⁵³ Brown, *Body and Society*, *passim* discusses the practice of permanent sexual renunciation—continence, celibacy, and life-long virginity—that developed in Christian circles from the first to the fifth centuries C.E.

financially in order to impress her. Despite the opposition of her admirers the actress resolved to convert. After her baptism she lived in austerity wearing a hair shirt.⁵⁴ Chrysostom may have completely fabricated the story of the converted actress, nevertheless it would have had a certain ring of authenticity for congregations in late fourth century Syria. By repudiating every connection with her former way of life the penitent actress in Chrysostom's sermon exemplified not only Christian canons that actresses leave their profession after baptism, but also fulfilled the spirit of the imperial edict. By giving up the luxurious and ostentatious gowns of a woman of ill repute and adopting the hair shirt of a chaste ascetic the anonymous actress's choice of clothing was an outward symbol of the dramatic change in her sexual identity.⁵⁵ Stories of converted actresses gained popularity and circulated widely in the Empire. For a brief time Christianity offered actresses an unprecedented opportunity for both spiritual and social redemption.

By A.D. 392 Christian emperors had severed their last ties to the imperial cult and had substituted Christianity as the sole source of imperial religious legitimation.⁵⁶ This action paved the way for the absorption of Christianity into civic life that would become the hallmark of Byzantine society. Divested of all overt links with paganism and infused with imperial Christian symbolism, the public spectacles continued to thrive under Christian rulers.⁵⁷ A number of edicts dating from the turn of the fifth

⁵⁴ Chrysostom Hom 67 in *Matt.*, PG 58, 636-37.

⁵⁵ John Anson, "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: The Origin and Development of a Motif," *Viator* 5 (1974), 1-32; Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1983), 17-24; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Life of Melania, the Younger* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984), 155; Eva Catafygiotu Topping, "Thekla the Nun: in Praise of Woman," *GOTR* 25 (Winter 1980), 353-370; Khalifa Abubakr Bennasser, *Gender and Sanctity in Early Byzantine Monasticism: A Study of the Phenomenon of Female Ascetics in Male Monastic Habit, with a translation of the Life of St. Matrona* (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1983), 31, 40-44, 60-67, 71-73; Elizabeth Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male: Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformations of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds., *Body Guards: the cultural politics of gender and ambiguity* (London/New York: Routledge, 1991), 33-35; 43-44; Kerstin Bjerre-Aspegren, *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*, Renee Kieffer, ed. (Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 14-15, 79-82, 103-108, 133-140.

⁵⁶ French, "Christian Emperors," 29.

⁵⁷ French, "Christian Emperors," 63-70. C.Th. 8.7.21-22; 12.1.145; 14.7.13. See also Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the*

century demonstrate a conscious imperial attitude to make the public games less offensive to strict Christian moralists. The newly reorganized spectacles became inextricably identified with the most sacred Christian rulers, appointed by God as the protectors of the faithful and the champions of orthodoxy.⁵⁸ This accommodation to Christian sentiment raised the fundamental issue of what constituted the basis for an exemption from the stage. Certainly from an imperial viewpoint early Christian opposition to the games on the grounds of "idolatry" were no longer valid. Theodosius and Honorius may have reasoned that there was no reason to exempt actresses from their compulsory public service since they would be providing entertainment for an increasingly Christianized society under the supervision of Christian bureaucrats. C.Th. 15.7.13 (413/14 C.E.) commissions Diogenianus, Tribune of Amusements in Carthage, to recall to the stage all those actresses who previously had received an immunity from compulsory public service in the theatre. The legal, social, and religious implications of the repeal of C.Th. 15.7.4 for a former actress and for the empire at large were certainly enormous. Presumably the woman's legal ignominy returned with the resumption of her theatrical career. This setback in the legal and social gains actresses had made is part of a broader trend as Christianity became absorbed into the wider Roman society. It supports earlier studies which suggest that in the fifth century there was a strong reaction to the gains women had made within the earlier Christian community and a return to traditional classical attitudes.⁵⁹

As the number of converts to Christianity increased and martyrdom all but disappeared by the beginning of the fifth century, the concept of baptism also underwent profound changes. For example Cyril of Jerusalem opposed those who believed that baptism conferred only remission of sins, the classic view of baptism up to this time. He argued that it implied a share not only in Christ's death, but also his suffering. Thus the image of baptism as martyrdom expanded to include the daily martyrdom of the ascetic.⁶⁰ The association of baptism with the suffering of Christ placed the ascetic's body in the foreground for everyone to see and hear about, just as the confessor's death had done. Once sexual renunciation became the

Early Medieval West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 100-111 for the Christianization of imperial victory celebrations in the Christian Roman empire.

⁵⁸ Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 152-53.

⁵⁹ Harvey, *Asceticism and Society*, 113; Herrin, "Byzantine Women," 181-184.

⁶⁰ Gordon Jeanes, "Baptism Portrayed as Martyrdom in the Early Church," *Studia Liturgica* 23, no. 2 (1993), 167.

distinguishing mark of the ascetic vocation, converted actresses became one embodiment of the ideal of extreme physical asceticism as a type of martyrdom.⁶¹ Prior to baptism these women were the personification of a blatant feminine sexuality which posed a threat to the Christian community. After baptism, according to the *topos*, the former actress shed her past completely and became the embodiment of heroic sexual renunciation.⁶² Although the prototype for the converted prostitute was Mary Magdalene, undoubtedly hagiographers drew upon and reinterpreted the widely circulated stories of converted actresses.⁶³ Moreover, the hagiographers and their audience were all too aware of the prominence of beautiful and sexually alluring actresses in public life, and could call upon their own personal observations in enumerating in explicit detail the physical attraction of such women.

The self-styled "James the Deacon" or "Jacob" employed vivid imagery in describing the conversion of the actress Pelagia which he presents as a miracle in his life of Bishop Nonnos. Jacob describes her as a famous mimical actress whose body became a battleground for opposing forces as evidenced by her clothing.⁶⁴ Before her conversion the actress's flagrant sexuality was immediately obvious. Her extravagant clothes, makeup, and jewelry all proclaimed her status as a dangerous seductress. Jacob asserts that numerous young men had squandered their family fortunes in an attempt to gain her favor. This is the same image of the actress as seductress that lay behind C.Th. 15.7.8 and the sermons of John Chrysostom.

⁶¹ Clark, *Women in Early Church*, 6 writes that once persecutions ceased in the early fourth century virginity replaced martyrdom as a means of showing extraordinary devotion to God. Therefore by leading an ascetic life one could imitate those who had gone to their deaths for the faith.

⁶² Clark, *Women in Early Church*, 16; Cloke, *Female Man*, 57; Avril Cameron, "Female Desire," 160.

⁶³ Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 1-21. Saphinaz-Amal Naguib, "The Martyr as Witness: Coptic and Copto-Arabic Hagiographies as Mediators of Religious Memory," *Numen* 41 (1994), 228 mentions how texts were recycled and adapted to the taste and mentality of the place and time. The theme of woman as the temptress runs through the *Lausiac History* of Palladius.

⁶⁴ Sebastian Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 40 discuss the difficulty of identifying bishop Nonnos. According to the author of the *Life*, Nonnos was a monk in Egypt, but his see is never named. Some scholars believe him to have been the Nonnos who was bishop of Edessa from 449-51 C.E. and 457-70/1 C.E. Brock and Harvey think this identification is unlikely, and suggest that the "suppression of details" by the hagiographer was deliberate since the *Life* was a "literary embellishment" of the story of the converted prostitute to whom Chrysostom refers.

Unlike the actresses in the fourth century imperial edict, however, Pelagia apparently had the freedom to leave her profession when she decided to convert. Jacob presents her baptism as signaling the beginning of a life of ascetic martyrdom when he describes how Pelagia shed the clothing of a high-class prostitute and voluntarily adopted the rough cloak of a hermit. Her selection of garments denoted her entrance into the rigorous ascetic life wherein, disguised as a man, she gained renown for her spirituality. For her, as for other ascetics, this new life meant the complete renunciation of sexuality.⁶⁵ According to the hagiographic *topos* it was only after her death that her true gender was discovered to the amazement of all. That a female, much less an actress/prostitute, could overcome her essentially sexual nature symbolized for Jacob the ultimate physical suffering. Sexual renunciation, like martyrdom, gave females an opportunity to rise above what Chrysostom considered to be the limitations of their sex.⁶⁶ For actresses the ascetic life offered the opportunity to opt out of a social framework in which one was permanently legally and socially degraded no matter how exemplary their life after their conversion. The Life of Pelagia became the paradigm for a whole cycle of extravagant romantic fables and romances associated with the names of Marina, Margaret, Euphrosyne and Theodora.⁶⁷

It is unclear to what extent the lives of actress/ascetics reflect the acceptance of actresses within the wider Byzantine society. Their appearance as exemplars in the sixth century suggests, at the very least, that their conversion was no longer an issue within the Christian community. Hagiographers would not have selected *mimae* as models of the faith unless Christian audiences could accept the premise.⁶⁸ Moreover, the popularity of this *topos* reflects society's continuing fascination with women of the stage. Nevertheless these lives reveal the continuity of the social construct of the actress as a seductress who preyed upon impressionable young men. The hagiographers

⁶⁵ Brown, *Body and Society*. See also Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Women in Early Byzantine Hagiography: Reversing the Story," in L. Coon, K. Haldane and E. Sommers, eds., *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 36-59.

⁶⁶ Clark, *Women in Early Church*, 16.

⁶⁷ Pierre Petitmengin, "La diffusion de la <Pénitence de Pélage>," *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés: IV^e-XII^e siècle* (Paris: Etudes augustinienes, 1981), 33-47 and *Pélage la Pénitente, Métamorphoses d'une légende* (2 vols., Paris: Etudes augustinienes, 1981).

⁶⁸ Harvey, *Asceticism and Society*, xiii notes that the change in standard hagiographic themes reveal the "subconscious concerns of their societies and serve to establish a large sense of order for those whom they are written to guide."

were writing for audiences all too familiar with easily recognizable stock characters in mimic plays, and they swiftly and accurately characterized the actress's sexuality in broad strokes by describing her hair, makeup, jewelry, and clothing. On the other hand the lives of actress/ascetics might just as easily be interpreted as the Christian appropriation of popular stage characters. Instead of the flagrant sexuality of the *mimae*, audiences would be provided with a new stock character—a transvestite saint whose sexual identity remains a secret until after her death. Seen in this light the Lives perpetuate an unaltered ecclesiastical policy that insisted that conversion for actresses meant the complete rejection of all connection with the stage—including her sexuality. The texts glorify neither the theatre nor the acting profession and promote the ascetic ideal of civic and bodily renunciation. This message suggests that Christian ideology had no appreciable impact on the social and legal realities of early Byzantine actresses.⁶⁹ Even though the stage came under the supervision of a Christian secretary of the theatre, the pre-Christian concept persisted that there was something morally reprehensible about the acting profession and everyone engaged in it.

The elevation of Theodora, a former actress, to the imperial throne in the first quarter of the sixth century undoubtedly helped to stimulate an interest in Lives featuring converted actors and actresses.⁷⁰ The historical, as opposed to the fictional, Theodora raises fundamental questions about the status of former actresses who did not become ascetics after their conversion but who tried to live socially respectable lives. Although Theodora had renounced the stage and had become a committed Christian before she met Justinian she, like other former actress, still suffered all of the social and legal disabilities barring her from marriage with a patrician. Before she and Justinian could marry Theodora had to be freed from the permanent degradation associated with women of the stage. C.J. 5.4.23 passed in 520-23 C.E. by the emperor Justin, but undoubtedly influenced by his nephew Justinian, did just that.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Arjava, "Women in Christian Empire," 6-9 addresses this issue from another perspective.

⁷⁰ For Theodora see Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); H. DeLancker, *Théodora: impératrice d'Orient* (Paris: Hachette, 1968); Elizabeth A. Fisher, "Theodora and Antonia in the *Historia Arcana*: history and/or fiction?" *Arethusa* 11 (1978), 253-79 reprinted in J. Peradotto and J.P. Sullivan, eds., *Women in the Ancient world. The Arethusa Papers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 287-313; and W.G. Holmes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora: a history of the sixth century A.D.* (2 vols., London: 1912); and Daube, "Marriage," 380-399.

⁷¹ Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, 2:29 contends that since Theodora had been made a

The primary intent of the rescript, however, was to pave the way for an actress to legally marry and not to remove her legal infamy. All of the provisions of the law explicitly link an imperial grant equivalent to the status of freebornhood with the right to contract a legal marriage with men whose social status had previously barred them from marriage with an actress or her daughter. By imperial degree successful petitioners no longer suffered permanent social and legal infamy. Indeed their past was completely obliterated (*direpta*) and they stood in a pristine legal state just as if (*quasi*) they had never previously led dishonorable lives (*nulla praecedente inhonesta vita*.) It followed that offspring, including daughters, from such unions were legitimate and could inherit their father's estate. Moreover, an actress's change in status also applied to any daughters she may have had prior to the imperial grant. Daughters who were born before the "purification" (*expurgationem*) of their mothers were permitted to petition the Emperor for a rescript by means of which they might be permitted to marry "just as if they were not the daughters of actresses" (*quasi non sint scaenicae matris filiae*). This is an important departure from Roman family law in which the legal status of children depended upon the status of their mother at the time each child was born.⁷² In the past a subsequent change in a mother's status would have had no effect upon her offspring. According to the terms of C.J. 5.4.23, however, the daughter would be entitled to an imperial conferment of unrestricted marriage capacity.⁷³ The daughter of a working actress had to wait until her mother's demise before she could apply for an imperial grant to be free from the "blemish of her mother's reputation" (*liberationem maternae iniuriae*) and be granted permission to marry persons who "not long ago were prohibited from marrying the daughter of an actress" (*dudum scaenicae filiam uxorem ducere prohibebantur*). Finally, one of the last provisions of the rescript reiterates the marital intent of the law by stipulating that if the projected marriage failed to take place after the imperial grant the woman nevertheless retained her right of freebornhood.⁷⁴

patrician some time before 524 she was eligible to marry a senator even if she had been on the stage. Daub, "Impossible Laws," 77-79 convincingly argues the contrary.

⁷² P.R.C. Weaver, "Children of Freedmen (and Freedwomen)" in Beryl Rawson, ed., *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 174.

⁷³ Daube, "Marriage," 392. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 311 notes that husbands did not regard themselves dishonored by their wives' misconduct. The third parties really effected by a woman's bad reputation are her children.

⁷⁴ C.J. 5.4.23.3 (*Sed etsi tales mulieres post divinum rescriptum ad preces earum datum ad matrimonium venire distulerint, salvam eis nihilo minus existimationem servari praecipimus tam in aliis omnibus quam ad transmittendam quibus voluerint suam substantiam et suscipiendam competentem sibi*

Clearly C.J. 5.4.23 was influenced by both the Christian concept of baptism as a rite which washed away one's past and made the convert a new creature and the Stoic concept of an ideal state of nature where all men were born free. Justinian baldly states that in granting former women of the stage the hope of improving their status he is following God's example. Since God is always willing to pardon the sins daily committed by men, accept their repentance, and bring them to a better condition, he writes, the ruler ought to imitate the benevolence of God, as far as his human nature would permit.⁷⁵ According to the terms of the rescript successful petitioners were in effect born again and returned to their native condition. The rescript states: "For all blemish having been utterly wiped out, and these women, so to speak, handed back to their native condition, we wish that neither shall a dishonorable designation henceforth attach to them nor shall they be any different from those who have committed no such sin." (*Nam omni macula penitus direpta et quasi suis natalibus huiusmodi mulieribus redditus neque vocabulum inhonestum eis inhaerere de cetero volumus neque differentiam aliquam eas habere cum his, quae nihil simile peccaverunt.*) Justinian clearly notes the parallel legal infamy between former slaves and women of the stage. It would be unjust to raise "slaves, to whom their liberty has been given," to the status of men who are born free, and place them in the same position "as if they had never been slaves, but were freeborn" (*quasi numquam deservissent, sed ingenui nati essent*) and deny hope of a better condition to "women who had devoted themselves to theatrical performances, and, afterwards having become disgusted with this degraded status, abandoned their infamous occupation and obtained better repute" (*mulieres autem, quae scaenicis quidem sese ludis immiscuerunt, postea vero sprete mala condicione ad meliorem migravere sententiam et inhonestam professionem effugerunt*).

A fundamental question of course is how many actresses and their daughters benefited from the rescript. It is unlikely the law would have been written if Justinian had not wanted to marry Theodora. No doubt a small and select number of women who had formed a potential marriage alliance

legibus ab aliis relictam vel ab intestato delatam hereditatem). "If, however, women of this description, after an Imperial Rescript has been granted them in accordance with their request, should defer contracting marriage, we order that their reputations shall, nevertheless, remain intact, as in the case of all others who may desire to transfer their property to anyone, in accordance with law, or an estate which may descend to them on the ground of intestacy."

⁷⁵ "nam ita credimus dei benevolentiam et circa genus humanum nimiam clementiam quantum nostrae naturae possibile est imitari."

with a man from the senatorial class received an imperial grant of marriage. Significantly the marriage of Justinian and Theodora c. 524 C.E. brought in its wake the marriage of her sister Comito to Sittas, one of Justinian's most trusted generals, and that of the actress Antonina with the self-made general Belisarius.⁷⁶ Theodora herself had an illegitimate daughter who benefited from this law. She came to live in honor in Constantinople and made illustrious matches for her sons.⁷⁷ Although Theodora and her daughter, Comito, and Antonia profited from Justinian's marriage law it is unlikely that the edict had any appreciable impact on the status of the majority of actresses.⁷⁸ There is nothing in the sources to suggest that it became commonplace for actresses to marry into the highest echelons of early Byzantine society.⁷⁹ Nor is there evidence that significant numbers of penitent actresses received an imperial grant altering their legal status. Today it would be imprudent to argue as did Alexander Vasiliev in 1950 that the implications of C.J. 5.4.23 were so great that it could be interpreted as "merely one step in the process of the emancipation of women which goes back to the fourth and fifth centuries and was in accordance with Christian sentiment."⁸⁰ The law applied to a narrowly defined group of women, former actresses and their daughters, who met specific conditions and had applied for an imperial grant to contract a legal marriage.

Only those women of the stage who "having deserted their evil and disgraceful condition, (they) embrace a more proper life, and conduct themselves honorably" were eligible to apply for the imperial grant. Working actresses and their daughters, married actresses, freedwomen and their daughters, daughters of tavernkeepers, and prostitutes continued to suffer all of the legal infamy and marriage disabilities they had endured since the first century.⁸¹

The question that must be raised is why, aside from the obvious personal concern that Justinian had in preparing the way for his marriage

⁷⁶ Averil Cameron, *Procopius*, 81.

⁷⁷ Averil Cameron, *Procopius*, 81.

⁷⁸ Daube, "Marriage," 392.

⁷⁹ Browning, *Justinian*, 41.

⁸⁰ Vasiliev, 92.

⁸¹ C.J. 5.4.23.7 "We, under all circumstances, annul criminal and incestuous unions, as well as those which were especially prohibited by the provisions of former laws; with the exception, however, of such as We authorize by the present decree . . ." (*Nam nefarios et incestos coitus omnibus modis amputamus, sicut et illos, qui praeteritarum legum sanctione specialiter vetiti sunt, exceptis videlicet his, quos praesenti lege permisimus legitime matrimonii iure muniri praecepimus.*)

with Theodora, the rescript only applies to former actresses and their daughters. One reason might be the lingering disjunction between an actress's legal infamy and her public adoration. By performing in the public sphere women of the stage had a greater potential to gain access to men of higher social status that was denied to other infamous women. Their beauty, talent, and sexual allure may have been particularly attractive to self-made men like Sittas and Bellasarius, who recently had made their way into the senatorial class and were less likely to have class prejudices against women of the stage. What C.J. 5.4.23 did was to make it possible for a select number of former actresses and their daughters to breach the centuries long marital boundaries protecting the senatorial class. These women had to meet very specific requirements that removed the fears that women of the stage would not be chaste wives. In this respect Justinian's sixth century marriage law resonates with C.Th. 15.7.4, 8 and 9 of the late fourth century. The primary source of male anxiety about women of the stage in the sixth century, as it was in the fourth, was the fear that they would not embody the societal ideal of a chaste matron once they had received an imperial concession.

The wording of C.J. 5.4.23 continues to put forward the social construct of actresses as morally depraved individuals who consciously chose an infamous occupation because of the "weakness of their sex" (*imbecillitate sexus*). The innuendo of sexual promiscuity permeates the texts. The rescript stipulates that only women who had already demonstrated that they had replaced their "dishonorable conduct," "disgraceful choice of life," and "dishonorable acts" with "a display of proper moderation" and obtained a "better repute" could have their infamous status replaced with that of a free born person and therefore contract an honorable marriage.⁸² The new status meant that the women no longer had a disreputable past. They were not reformed actresses or even former actresses but legally they were new creatures.

Nevertheless, Procopius's *Secret History* demonstrates how difficult it was for some members of early Byzantine society to forgive and forget an actress's infamous past. His invective against the Empress focuses almost exclusively on what he alleges to be her sexual misconduct. According to Procopius Theodora was not the reformed woman eligible for marriage with a senator as proscribed in C.J. 5.4.23. He concocted stories, embellished with lurid and explicit detail to lend credibility to his allegations, of

⁸² C.J. 5.4.23.1

Theodora's insatiable sexual appetite before and after her marriage to Justinian. Although it is unlikely that Procopius was telling the truth about the Empress's behavior he chose to attack her in the one area of her life where she and other Byzantine women were the most vulnerable—their reputation. While it may be true as Averil Cameron asserts that once Theodora became empress her past became irrelevant for men such as John of Ephesus and others whose causes she supported, for others it remained an issue.⁸³ The cultural prejudice against actresses meant that Procopius thought his readers might be willing to believe, or at least accept the possibility, that there was some truth to the most outrageous and titillating yarns he spun about Theodora's sexual conduct.⁸⁴ He knew there was always the lingering aura of licentiousness and wantonness surrounding women who had had any connection with the stage and he revelled in exploiting that prejudice.

This conclusion is supported by the example of the two holy fools in John of Ephesus's *Lives of Eastern Saints* written in the late sixth century. According to John, a man and a woman living in spiritual marriage stayed for a time in Amida, "a city of Christians," masquerading by day as mimical performers—hence as harlot and pimp. By adopting the disguise of actor and actress the couple daily suffered abuse and humiliation. Their secret holy life was uncovered by a monk who was intrigued by the fact that men who wished to buy the woman's favors could not find the couple after dark. The monk covertly followed the couple one night and discovered that they were not what they had pretended to be. He observed them praying in a remote spot on the city walls, the air around them shining in radiance. After they had been confronted by the monk and confessed to the form of asceticism they had been practising, the couple quickly left Amida. If their secret had become known they would no longer have been the object of abuse by the citizens of Amida, an essential part of their asceticism.⁸⁵ The story emphasizes that the social construct of theatrical performers as sexually degenerate was a continuing source of social stigma

⁸³ C.J. 5.4.23 "*lapsus quoque mulierum, per quos indignam honore conversationem imbecillitate sexus elegerint, cum competenti moderatione sublevandos esse censemus minimeque eis spem melioris conditionis adimere, ut ad eam respicientes improvidam et minus honestam electionem facilius derelinquant.*"

⁸⁴ Cameron, *Procopius*, 77–78. A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (2 vols.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), 1.270 believes that the aristocracy bitterly hated her.

⁸⁵ Procopius, *Secret History* 9.10–26.

and anxiety. It further suggests that theatrical performers, at least those of the most common sort, may have suffered more social abuse in a largely Christian society than they had prior to the fifth century.

In conclusion, while some segments of society were perfectly willing to overlook the social and legal stigma suffered by women of the stage and their daughters, early Byzantine society as a whole inherited and maintained both the social construct of actresses as sexually depraved women and also the Roman legal concept of permanent degradation for some individuals and professions. For all but a handful of fortunate women, the legal infamy and social barriers prohibiting actresses and their daughters from contracting legal marriages continued into early Byzantine society. Actresses and their daughters were given the opportunity to convert and redeem their souls but only on the condition that they sever all connection with the stage. Even then the social stigma of a former actress's infamy continued to be a barrier to her husband's ability to advance to the office of bishop. Only those actresses who completely disguised their female identity and adopted the life of a male ascetic were able to overcome the social and legal infamy and become models of the faith.⁸⁶

Santa Clara University, Dept. of History
Santa Clara, CA 95053

⁸⁶ Harvey, *Asceticism & Society*, 92. See also John of Ephesus, *Lives* 52 PO 19:164-79.



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Antifamilial Tendencies in Ancient Christianity

ELIZABETH A. CLARK

*Department of Religion
Duke University*

EARLY IN THE FIFTH CENTURY, the church father Jerome wrote to a highborn Christian widow named Geruchia, exhorting her not to remarry. Although earlier in his letter Jerome had tried to shame her presumed indecision by pointing to the chastity of various pagan religious officiants, from the *flamen Dialis* to the Vestal Virgins, he suddenly seized upon an example whose function it was to impress upon Geruchia the immorality of pagan marital customs.¹ While working in Rome as a papal secretary some twenty-five years earlier, Jerome reports, he had witnessed an event that had stirred all the city: the marriage of a couple in which “the man had already buried twenty wives and the woman had had twenty-two husbands.” Jerome’s disgust at this display of excessive nuptiality is palpable.² Yet the incoherence of Jerome’s rhetoric—Are pagans more or less maritally upright than Christians?—betrays its ideological function. If pagan marriage was to suffer such a crisis of representation (or misrepresentation) at the hands of Christian authors, did the depiction of Christian marriage and family devotion receive more “realistic” expression from its advocates?

Was, for example, the claim of the soon-to-be martyred Phileas, in the presence of his despondent wife and children, that not they, but the apostles and martyrs, were his “parentes et propinquos” less ideologi-

¹ Jerome *Ep.* 123.7.1 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* [hereafter, CSEL] 56.80); Jerome borrows here from Tertullian’s *De exhortatio castitatis* 13. (Throughout these footnotes, numberings of Greek and Latin texts follow that in the editions used, which sometimes differ from the numberings found in translations.)

² Jerome *Ep.* 123.9.1–2 (CSEL 56.82–83).

cally constructed?³ Or the report that when Melania the Elder lost her husband and two of her three children in rapid succession, she thanked God for relieving her of such a great burden?⁴ Or the tale recounted by John Cassian of a would-be monk who, upon leaving his wife, told her that if Moses allowed wives to be divorced for the hardness of their hearts, why should not Christ allow this for the desire of chastity?⁵ These stories do not, I think, typify the behavior of most early Christians, any more than Jerome's tale of the much-married couple exemplified customary pagan practice. Yet there is an important difference in the two instances: Jerome's report of the pagan couple who had seen forty-three marriages ran up against a nostalgic ideology of Roman marriage, while the words of the Christian renunciants here cited encapsulate the dominant ascetic ideology of late ancient Christian authors.⁶

As classicist Suzanne Dixon has emphasized, the "sentimental ideal" of the once-married Roman matron emerged as a *topos* at the very moment that its basis in an operative system of property had crumbled; nonetheless, it persisted throughout the Imperial era to fire the moral and religious imagination of Romans.⁷ The ideal of the *univira*, Dixon writes, "assumed a static property system in which women moved only once in a lifetime, taking with them their intestate portion, which remained with their conjugal family whether they died in the marriage or

³ *Acta Phileae* 6, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. Herbert Musurillo (Oxford, 1972), pp. 348, 350. On the ideological construction of gender issues in early Christianity, see my "Ideology, History, and the Construction of 'Woman' in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 155–84.

⁴ Jerome *Ep.* 39.5.4 (CSEL 54.305).

⁵ John Cassian *Conlationes* 21.9 (*Sources Chrétiennes* [hereafter, SC] 64.83); although the biblical reference cited is Matt. 19:29, only the Lucan version of the pericope (Luke 14:26) contains the word *wife*; see Matt. 19:8 on "hardness of heart."

⁶ Whereas Brent Shaw contrasts the "seeming discontinuity" between the traditional Roman ideology of the family and the "experience" of Augustine's (somewhat Christian) family, I propose to note the discontinuity between both traditional pagan and Christian familial ideas, on the one hand, and Christian ascetic ideals, on the other, with what little we can glimpse of social and legal "realities." See Brent D. Shaw, "The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine," *Past and Present*, no. 115 (1987), pp. 3–51. For an anthropologist's caution against overreliance on law for an understanding of marriage in other, or past, societies, see Pierre Bourdieu, "Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Reproduction," trans. E. Forster, in *Family and Society: Selections from the Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (1972; Baltimore, 1976), pp. 117–44. Given the well-known principle that Roman law often dragged behind current social reality (e.g., Richard Saller, "Roman Heirship Strategies in Principle and Practice," in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller [New Haven, CT, 1991], p. 29), the fact that, regarding laws pertaining to married women, the church fathers were often more conservative than even the law is worth noting.

⁷ Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, 1992), pp. 77, 88–89.

not.”⁸ The reality of Roman marital life, she notes, was quite different from this “sentimental ideal”: “the exposure of children, the failure to mourn many young children, arranged marriages, violence and coldness within the family, casual divorce, and remarriage on divorce or widowhood.”⁹ The shift from a “merged to a separate regime” of property is, according to Dixon, “the most significant historical development in Roman marriage”—which probably can be correlated with the changed expectation that a woman might well marry more than once and hence needed to have relative control over her own property.¹⁰

For Christians, the “reality” of marriage was not necessarily different. Letters, sermons, and ecclesiastical decrees constitute an unhappy record of Christian men sleeping with slaves, raping nuns, frequenting brothels, and going to “sex shows” at which girls swam naked; of Christian women divorcing their husbands; of Christian parents “leasing” their children into slavery.¹¹ Nonetheless, the Roman “sentimental ideal” of matronhood—even faithful, devoted matronhood—was demoted by Christian authors in favor of the virgin’s exaltation. The prize of the “one-hundred-fold harvest” now went to the virgin, while the married woman was relegated to “thirtyfold” status.¹² It was not just that classical ideas of *pietas* and marital loyalty often failed in practice (pagans themselves knew this) but that the theory of filial and parental devotion had received a crushing blow. This essay, then, does not so much concern the “real” family of Christian antiquity, nor the family as praised in sentimental rhetoric, but the ideology of antifamilialism, by which I mean a propagandistic attack on the family whose effect (whatever its intention) is to bolster the power of ecclesiastical leaders and their values. That this ideology of antifamilialism was advanced through a variety of argumentative and interpretive techniques shall be detailed in what follows. That it also gives us little access to “reality” should also become apparent—an acknowledgment that calls for a reconsideration of the historian’s task when she works on documents such as these: to this point I shall return at the end of this article.

The blow to “family values” that attended the advent of Christianity

⁸Ibid., p. 77.

⁹Suzanne Dixon, “The Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family,” in *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Oxford, 1991), p. 113.

¹⁰Dixon, *The Roman Family*, p. 74.

¹¹For examples, see Augustine *Epp.* 9*, 10*, 15* (CSEL 88.43–51, 84–85); *Serm.* 9.3.3 (*Patrologia Latina* [hereafter, *PL*] 38.76–77); *Serm.* 392.3.2 (*PL* 39.1710); Jerome *Ep.* 77.3 (CSEL 55.38–40); John Chrysostom *Hom.* 7 *Matt.* 6 (*Patrologia Graeca* [hereafter, *PG*] 57.80), cf. *Hom.* 6 *Matt.* 8 (*PG* 57.72); *Martyrion tōn Hagion Ptolemaion kai Loukion* 1–5 (Musurillo, ed., p. 38).

¹²Jerome’s famous image, in *Epp.* 22.15, 49 (48).3, 66.2, 123.8.

is evident in the New Testament itself. The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—themselves present Jesus’ teaching in ways that his followers could easily interpret as antifamilial. To Jesus are ascribed the words that he has come to bring a “sword” that will divide families (Matt. 10:34–39). A follower of Jesus is told that he must “hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters” (Luke 14:26). When informed that his mother and brothers were waiting outside to see him, Jesus rejects their privilege as members of his “natural” family, claiming instead that those who do the word of God are his family (Matt. 12:46–49; Luke 8:19–21; Mark 3:31–35). The woman who calls out to Jesus, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!” is corrected by Jesus’ reply: “Blessed rather (*menoun*) are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:27–28). Most important of all were two passages in the Gospels: the verses praising followers of Jesus who become “eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 19:10–12), usually interpreted to refer to those who adopted lives of sexual renunciation, and the verses claiming that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35). Early Christians understood the latter to mean that even here and now we might participate in this “angelic” state—to be ours more fully later on—by adopting lives of celibacy.

Such sayings attributed to Jesus may well have been prompted by the expectation of the Kingdom of God. The followers of Jesus believed that God was once more about to break into human history, to destroy the present era and create a new one in which the poor, the hungry, and the weeping would receive the rewards so frequently denied them (Luke 6:20–26; Matt. 5:3–12). In this eschatological context—the context about the “last age”—Christians understood that Jesus had called them to lives in which traditional values (including those pertaining to the family) were displaced by an ethic of radical allegiance to God alone. When the Kingdom would come “like a thief in the night” (Matt. 24:42; Luke 12:30), all must be ready to greet Christ the Bridegroom—not to linger with earthly husbands.

An eschatological motivation similarly informs Paul’s advocacy of celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7, the single chapter of the New Testament most important for the development of Christian asceticism in the era of the church fathers. Paul there praises the unmarried state “because of the impending distress” (1 Cor. 7:26), because “the appointed time has grown very short” (1 Cor. 7:29), because “the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31). For those who cannot control their desires, marriage stands as an acceptable remedy (1 Cor. 7:2): note that to forestall the temptation to sexual straying is the only reason Paul here gives

for marriage. He claims that the married are full of anxieties about “worldly affairs,” about how to please their spouses; those who remain celibate, by contrast, worry only about “pleasing the Lord,” about being “holy in body and spirit” (1 Cor. 7:32–34). Rather than advocate divorce, however, Paul advised those who were already married to live “as though they were not” (1 Cor. 7:29).

Although Paul here sets a “practical” argument about freedom from worldly cares in the context of expectation about the imminent end of the world, it needed to be separated from its eschatological grounding by ascetically inclined patristic writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, who no longer believed that the “end” would come any time soon. Paul’s rather casual warning against the anxieties occasioned by marriage and “pleasing a spouse” is now hardened and tightened in the next few Christian centuries into the topos of the “woes of marriage,” a catalog developed by earlier pagan philosophers and satirists that was now lifted from their antimarital diatribes by Christian polemicists.¹³ For example, the pagan theme of the despotism of the wealthy wife shows up with some regularity in the treatises of the church fathers.¹⁴ Thus John Chrysostom, writing at the turn to the fifth century, can intone, “If you take a rich wife, it is not a woman you take but a despot. If women are already full of pride and are greedy for honors, what will happen if she is rich as well?”¹⁵ Elsewhere, he answers his question: “She will not allow him to keep his place of dominance, but with an insane arrogance banishes him from that rank and relegates him to the station that is properly hers, that is to say, one of subordination: *she* becomes the head and chief.”¹⁶ According to Chrysostom, the rich woman is, in effect, a “wild beast” rather than a wife.¹⁷

Despite the familiarity of such complaints from pagan literature, an important reversal occurs between pagan and Christian arguments re-

¹³See, e.g., Jerome’s appropriation of “Theophrastus’s” work on marriage in *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.47; for discussions of Jerome’s borrowings from pagan treatises in this section of the work, see Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris, 1948), pp. 60–62; and Harald Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics: A Study on the Apologists, Jerome and Other Christian Writers* (Göteborg, 1958), pp. 146–53.

¹⁴See examples and discussion in Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 89, 184, 198, 199, 210, 330, 340. Note Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller’s comment (*The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* [London, 1987], p. 135) that a woman’s freedom to use her money in marriage, and to divorce, taking much of her dowry with her, should be “set against the paternalism inherent in the age difference and the ideology of the husband’s superiority.”

¹⁵John Chrysostom *Quales ducendae sint uxores* 4 (PG 51.231).

¹⁶John Chrysostom *De virginitate* 53 (SC 125.300).

¹⁷John Chrysostom *Hom. 49 in Acta* 4 (PG 60.344).

garding the “woes of marriage”: *which* sex is the most disadvantaged. For ancient pagan authors (males, needless to say), it was men who were imagined to bear the greatest burdens of marriage. Thus the wise man might benefit from remaining celibate, for a wife’s mundane services could just as well be supplied by others. As one diatribe against marriage attributed to an ancient pagan philosopher put it, a wife is the only commodity a man acquires which he cannot “try out” first: hence marrying a wife is more precarious than (say) buying a pot or an animal.¹⁸

For Christian writers of an ascetic stripe, however, the more disadvantaged party in marriage was thought to be the wife—or so we infer from the large number of letters and treatises they direct to women that outline the “woes of marriage.” The theme of female servitude and subjection in marriage is scored hard. Should a Christian woman be married to a pagan, they argue, he will try to prevent her churchly activities and will want her to participate in pagan rituals. Such husbands should not be jollied, the church father Tertullian warns; he compares them to pigs, quoting to his Christian female audience the biblical injunction (now rich with sexual innuendo), “Cast not your pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6).¹⁹ For all women, pregnancy is depicted in ways calculated to cool their ardor for childbearing: why, Jerome asks a young and childless widow, would she wish to imitate the dog of Prov. 26:11 and “return to her own vomit”?²⁰ Next, the difficulties of bearing and raising children are given high rhetorical profile,²¹ with the special troubles attending the presence of stepchildren at the forefront (a sure clue that remarriage was practiced by Christians).²² Likewise, the very real worry of the deaths of spouse and children become grist for the mill of Christian ascetic propa-

¹⁸“Theophrastus,” in Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.47 (PL 23.289); another Christian rendition of the same argument is given by John Chrysostom in *Quales ducendae sint uxores* 1 (PG 51.226).

¹⁹Tertullian *Ad uxorem* 2.4–6 (*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* [hereafter, CCL] 1.388–91). Tertullian writes in the opening years of the third century.

²⁰Jerome *Ep.* 54.4.1 (CSEL 54.468–69).

²¹For example, Gregory of Nyssa *De virginitate* 3.5–6 (SC 119.284–90); [Anonymous] *De castitate* 17 (PLS 1.1501); John Chrysostom *Mulier alligata* 4 (PG 51.223).

²²Ambrose *De viduis* 15.88 (PL 16.275); John Chrysostom *Vidua eligatur* 6 (PG 51.326); Jerome *Ep.* 54.15.2–3 (CSEL 54.482). Since in cases of divorce children generally stayed in their father’s family, a woman might well encounter stepchildren. Nonetheless, given the Christian campaign against divorce and remarriage (even if not entirely effective), there may have been fewer Christian women marrying divorced men than was common in earlier periods of Roman history—although, to be sure, they still would be marrying widowers. For the frequency of divorce and remarriage, with stepchildren as an issue, see Keith R. Bradley, “Dislocation in the Roman Family,” and “Remarriage and the Structure of the Upper-Class Family at Rome,” both in his *Discovering the Roman Family: Studies in Roman Social History* (New York, 1991), pp. 125–55, 156–76.

ganda.²³ Above all, the church fathers stress to women audiences the “slavery” of marriage.²⁴ In feigned amazement, Ambrose (bishop of Milan in the late fourth century) marvels that Christian families eagerly pay for their daughters to enter this servitude, alluding to dowry arrangements in which (as he pointedly puts it) sons-in-law are “bought.”²⁵

Still other marital themes familiar to pagans were given a novel twist by Christian writers. Take the topic of death in relation to reproduction: the replication of the next generation was, for many pagans, imagined both as a civic duty and as the means to purchase a small bit of immortality for oneself through the ongoing lives of one’s descendants.²⁶ Christian authors, however, scorned such mundane concerns. In addition to mocking their fellow Christians who imagined that death was an evil²⁷ or who worried about heirs (inappropriate for those who had allegedly “disinherited” themselves from the world),²⁸ ascetically inclined patristic writers linked death to marriage in a way that might have seemed bizarre to pagan audiences: marriage, they claimed, derived from the first sin that brought death to the world. “Where death is, there is marriage,” John Chrysostom intoned.²⁹ More sinister still is Gregory of Nyssa’s thesis that parents bring forth children only to embark them on the road that leads to death. Virginity, he argues, prevents the constant production of new beings doomed to die; it stays the advance of death by refusing to participate in the process of procreation that marches resolutely toward the grave. Gregory concludes, “The power of death will not function if marriage does not furnish it with fuel and provide it with

²³For discussions of mortality rates, see Keith Hopkins, “On the Probable Age Structure of the Roman Population,” *Population Studies* 20 (1966): 245–64; Bruce Frier, “Roman Life Expectancy: The Pannonian Evidence,” *Phoenix* 37 (1983): 328–44; and see n. 77 below. For how mortality rates affected politics, see Keith Hopkins with Keith Burton, “Political Succession in the Late Republic (249–50 B.C.),” in Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, *Sociological Studies in Roman History* 2 (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 31–119.

²⁴Jerome *Comm. in Eph.* 3 (on Eph. 5:22–23) (PL 26.564, 570), *Comm. in Titum* (on Titus 2:3–5) (PL 26.581–82), *Epp.* 49 (48).6.1; 14.13 (CSEL 54.358.375), 145 (CSEL 56.306); Augustine *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.30.63 (PL 33.1336); *Tractatus Iohannem* 2.14.3 (PL 35.1395); Ambrose *Exhortatio virginitatis* 4.20–22 (PL 16.357–58); *De virginitate* 6.33 (PL 16.288); *De viduis* 11.69, 13.81 (PL 16.268.273).

²⁵Ambrose *Exhortatio virginitatis* 4.23 (PL 16.358); *De virginibus* 1.7.33 (PL 16.209).

²⁶Borrowed by some Christian writers, e.g., John Chrysostom *Propter fornicationes* 3 (PG 51.213), *Hom. 18 in Gen.* 4 (PG 53.154), *Hom. 20 Gen.* 1 (PG 53.167).

²⁷For example, John Chrysostom *Vidua eligatur* 1 (PG 51.322).

²⁸Tertullian *De monogamia* 16.4 (CCL 2.1251); [Anonymous] *De castitate* 17 (*Patrologia Latina Supplementum* [hereafter, PLS] 1.1499–1500).

²⁹John Chrysostom *De virginitate* 14.6 (SC 125.142); cf. Tertullian *Adversus Marcionem* 4.38.

victims who are like condemned prisoners”: children are here the “tinder” that fuels the fires of death.³⁰

Other ascetic devaluations of marriage rest not in reinterpretations of pagan motifs but on interpretations of biblical verses that harden and tighten their ascetic import. For example, the fact that Paul lists “the temptation to fornication” as the only reason for conceding marriage (1 Cor. 7:2)—it being “better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:9)—could prompt later Christian writers to compare Paul to a good physician, who does not require his “patient” to endure more than he is able.³¹ But in a clever argument against “overdosing,” the interpreter further claims that if Christians are not sick, they do not need someone else’s medicine.³² Marriage is here a drug that stays (but does not cure) the “illness” of sexual desire—and that should be prescribed only for the “ailing.”

The Hebrew Bible, for its part, both lent assistance to, and posed problems for, the ascetic campaign. Take, for example, the codes on priestly purity found in the book of Leviticus. In the hands of later ascetic interpreters, the limited sexual restrictions placed on ancient Hebrew priests were widened and adopted for the ethical discipline of Christian laypeople. Thus ascetic writers concluded that since all Christians are “priests” (Rev. 1:6), and must always be praying (1 Thess. 5:17), not only should married Christian priests abandon sexual relations with their wives during their time of office,³³ but all Christian couples might relinquish sexual relation—and not just for the brief periods that enable prayer, as suggested by Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 7:5.³⁴ The fear of temporary priestly “uncleanness” derived from Hebrew ritual law is here transposed onto Christian marriage and is bolstered by appeals to such biblical passages as the description of animals who entered Noah’s ark: it was the unclean ones who entered “two by two.”³⁵ The purest of all Christian couples would be those who never

³⁰Gregory of Nyssa *De virginitate* 14.1 (SC 199.432–36), a treatise written in the third quarter of the fourth century.

³¹[Anonymous] *De castitate* 9.2 (PLS 1.1478); cf. Jerome’s phrase, that marriage is a “plank after shipwreck” (of “the Fall”) (*Ep.* 117.3.2 [CSEL 55.425]).

³²[Anonymous] *De castitate* 10.3 (PLS 1.1480).

³³Ambrose *De officiis ministrorum* 1.50.248 (PL 16.104–5). In Jerome’s view, reproduction is analogous to those priestly regulations that Christians no longer keep: *Ep.* 52.10 (CSEL 54.431–33).

³⁴[Anonymous] *De castitate* 10.4, 3.3, cf. 5.2–3 (PLS 1.1480–81, 1466–67, 1473); Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.7, 1.20, 1.34 (PL 23.230, 249, 268–69); Ambrose *Exhortatio virginitatis* 10.62 (PL 16.370: one’s garments cannot be “white” all the time in marriage).

³⁵Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.16 (PL 23.246); *Epp.* 22.19.6 (CSEL 54.169–70), 123.8.2 (CSEL 56.81–82).

engaged in sexual relations, such as some patristic authors believed of Joseph and Mary.³⁶

If the Levitical codes could provide a positive impetus for Christian speculation on marital “uncleanness,” other texts from Hebrew Scripture proved far more problematic for ascetic commentators. What to do with passages that represented the Israelite heroes of yore disporting themselves in a decidedly nonascetic fashion? Why had God allowed the forebears of Jesus to conduct themselves in such unbecoming fashion? Since the foibles of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been noted in penetrating detail by opponents of orthodox Christianity (such as Marcionites and Manichaeans) who cited the low level of sexual morality displayed in the Old Testament as ample reason to reject its sacred authority, it was imperative for ascetic propagandists to address these tales of incest, polygamy, and rape head-on.³⁷

Certainly, the church fathers agreed, no contemporary Christian should copy such behavior.³⁸ But could it be defended at all? The major argument developed by early Christian writers to address this embarrassing dilemma appealed to “the difference in times” between the era of the Old Testament patriarchs and that of present-day Christians. Thus Methodius in his treatise, *The Banquet*, has one of his female symposiasts describe how God had allowed incest in the early days of the human race, which later was prohibited by Mosaic law; next polygamy, formerly tolerated, was forbidden. Eventually came an attack on the previously tolerated adultery—and finally, the Christian era bloomed, in which continence and virginity reigned supreme. According to Methodius, God like a skillful teacher had educated the human race in morality by stages, from the time that humans were allowed to “frolic like calves,” through their “student days,” to full maturity.³⁹ Thus various patristic writers argued that God had then permitted sexual behavior no longer acceptable for Christians so that the earth might be filled. God tolerated such practices in the past—but he certainly would not tolerate them now. As some ascetic writers rudely jeered, if Christians wish to indulge

³⁶Jerome *Adversus Helvidium* passim (PL 23.193–216); Ambrose *De institutione virginis* 7.47, 8.53 (PL 16.332, 334); Augustine *Serm.* 191.2.2 (PL 38.1010).

³⁷See esp. bk. 22 of Augustine’s *Contra Faustum*, which exhaustively details the examples cited against the “worthiness” of the Hebrew Bible by Faustus the Manichaean.

³⁸Tertullian *Exhortatio castitatis* 6 (CCL 2.1023–24).

³⁹Methodius *Symposium* 1.2.16–18 (Die Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte [hereafter, GCS] 27.9), a treatise probably composed in the early years of the fourth century. For other uses of the “difference in times” argument, see, e.g., Pelagius *Comm. in 1 Corinthios* (on 1 Cor. 7:1–3), in Alexander Souter, ed., *Pelagius’s Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of Paul*, Texts and Studies 9, 1 (Cambridge, 1922), 1:159–60; [Anonymous] *De castitate* 12.5 (PLS 1.1491).

in plural marriages as did Abraham, they might as well get circumcised and offer animal sacrifice along with him.⁴⁰

The New Testament could indeed be set against Old Testament mores in a way that provided patristic writers with a pointed assault upon the family, an assault that set aside both Roman notions of *pietas* and the Old Testament command to “honor thy father and thy mother.” Here, the antifamilial strain in Jesus’ teaching was appealed to in order to sanction the ascetic decision to renounce family. Thus for Tertullian, when Jesus asked, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” (Matt. 12:48; Luke 8:20–21), he was denying his own parents in the same way that he taught Christians to deny theirs, “for God’s work.”⁴¹ Likewise, the stories of the first disciples who abandoned their work and families to follow Jesus provided powerful ammunition for the ascetic cause. According to Jerome, they were embarked on a path to perfection that the rich young man of Matthew 19, who would not renounce his goods, could never achieve.⁴² Indeed, Jerome argues on the basis of Luke 18:29–30 that Jesus promised a reward to his devotees for leaving their children and wives to follow him.⁴³ And in the literature of the desert fathers, an anti-familial strain runs so deep that these ascetic heroes are represented as refusing to see relatives who come to visit,⁴⁴ or even to read the letters sent to them by their parents.⁴⁵

One of the most dramatic stories of the early Christian ascetic rejection of family is recounted in John Cassian’s *Institutes*. He tells the tale of a certain Paternutus, who wished to join a monastery in the company of his young son. To test Paternutus’s ascetic resolve, the child was struck, abused, and left to wallow in his own dirt, tears smudging his grimy face. Yet the abbot of the monastery had a harder test in store: he

⁴⁰[Anonymous] *De castitate* 15.4 (PLS 1.1498); Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.19 (PL 23.248); cf. the argument by Faustus the Manichaean in Augustine *Contra Faustum* 1.2–3 (CSEL 25.251–52).

⁴¹Tertullian *De carne Christi* 7.13 (CCL 2.889).

⁴²Jerome *Adversus Vigilantium* 14 (PL 23.366); cf. *Ep.* 38.5.1 (CSEL 54.292–93).

⁴³Jerome (*Adversus Jovinianum* 2.19 [PL 23.327]) elides this with his discussion of the Parable of the Sower and the rewards promised for those in each “category” of harvest.

⁴⁴For example, *Vita Pachomii* 37 (Bohairic; in *Pachomian Koinonia*, trans. Armand Veilleux, Cistercian Studies Series 45 [Kalamazoo, MI, 1988], 1:60–61) and John Cassian, *Conlationes* 24.9 (SC 64.179–80).

⁴⁵John Cassian *Institutiones* 5.32 (SC 109.240.242). On the phenomenon of the “disappearance” of the saint’s family after the first paragraphs of hagiographic *vitae*, see Laurent Theis, “Saints sans famille? Quelques remarques sur la famille dans le monde franc à travers les sources hagiographiques,” *Revue Historique* 255 (1976): 3–20. For an interesting study of the “antifamilial” direction of early Christian asceticism, see Philip Rousseau, “Blood-Relationships among Early Eastern Ascetics,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 23 (1972): 135–44.

ordered Paternus to throw his son into the fast-flowing river—and Paternus did. Unknown to the father, the abbot had stationed two monks by the shore to rescue the child from drowning. The point of the story, however, centers not on the fate of the child but on Paternus's obedience: he was proved such a worthy renunciant that he later assumed the abbot's place as head of the monastery.⁴⁶ To us, the tale signals child abuse; to ascetic listeners of yore, Paternus was a hero copying "the deed of Abraham."

Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac, it is worth noting, provided a biblical model for ascetics' renunciation of their families. In Ambrose's reflection on the story, Abraham knew that Isaac "would be more acceptable to God when sacrificed than when whole"; the commands of God, he concludes, are to be loved more than any pledges of human love (i.e., children).⁴⁷ Against such comments, the report furnished by such a "balanced" writer as Gregory Nazianzen that his own mother was given to saying that she would gladly sell herself and her children into slavery if by doing so she could acquire more money for helping the poor seems less startling.⁴⁸

Characters from Christian popular literature of the second and third centuries joined Abraham in the roster of models for renunciation of family—and in this case, the models were female.⁴⁹ Throughout the various Apocryphal Acts, women's abandonment of marital and family life is deemed a "good" that should be valued in and for itself, apart from the "practical" advantages attending such renunciation: asceticism is here construed as the "good news," the "gospel," of Christianity.⁵⁰ The ascetics' struggle against societal norms is graphically displayed in the Apocryphal Acts, as crowds seek to imprison or kill preachers of asceticism⁵¹ and mothers clamor to have their daughters, converts to the life of sexual renunciation, put to death by burning.⁵² In the Apocryphal Acts, biblical

⁴⁶John Cassian *Institutiones* 4.27–28 (SC 109.160.162). The *Institutes* were composed around 420.

⁴⁷Ambrose *De excessu fratris* 2.97 (PL 16.1401).

⁴⁸Gregory Nazianzen *Oratio* 18.21 (PG 35.1009).

⁴⁹See esp. the stories of Thecla in the Acts of Paul and Thecla; of Drusiana in the Acts of John; of Mygdonia in the Acts of Thomas; of Xanthippe in the Acts of Peter; of Maximilla in the Acts of Andrew.

⁵⁰For example, see the Acts of John 37, 63 ff.; the Acts of Peter 33–34; the Acts of Andrew 4–5; the Acts of Thomas 1, 9, 10.

⁵¹For example, Acts of Paul and Thecla 15; Acts of Thomas 9, 101; Martyrdom of Thomas 159, 169; Acts of Peter 34.

⁵²Acts of Paul and Thecla 20. It is interesting to see John Chrysostom (? *dubia*) attempt to lower the antifamilial heat by claiming in a *Homily on Thecla* (PG 50.746) that Thecla's parents had urged her to marry because they did not know that she had vowed herself to virginity.

passages could be rewritten to emphasize the ascetic import of the Christian message. Thus the author of the Acts of Paul and Thecla "improves" upon the Gospels' Beatitudes to dramatize the exhortation to asceticism. Thus Paul here sermonizes to his audience:

Blessed are those who keep the flesh pure, for they shall become the temple of God.

Blessed are the continent, for to them shall God speak . . .

Blessed are those who have wives as if they had them not, for they shall inherit God . . .

Blessed are the bodies of virgins, for they shall be well-pleasing to God and shall not lose the reward of their purity.⁵³

The popularity of such stories from the Apocryphal Acts among Christian audiences suggests that readers and hearers had come to enjoy a new, feminized version of the heroic epic, in which the battle cry had been transferred from the plains of Troy to the bosom of the family, now construed as the camp of the enemy.⁵⁴ Ambrose's advice to young female virgins echoes the theme of the Apocryphal Acts: "If you can conquer your home, you can conquer the world."⁵⁵

Ascetic authors, however, hastened to assure their audiences that they would receive a new and improved, indeed a heavenly, family to replace the one they were abandoning here on earth.⁵⁶ The language of familism as applied to the new "household" of the Christian faithful is, of course, found in the New Testament itself, often in the salutations and endings of various letters, where followers of Jesus are called "brother," "sister," and "mother"; and in 1 Pet. 4:17, Christians are referred to "the household [*oikos*] of God."

In the centuries beyond, this metaphorical family devolved largely on Jesus the Bridegroom, who symbolically replaced the fiancé or husband that the female ascetic renounces here on earth. Thus Jerome exhorts the teenage ascetic Eustochium in the words of Psalm 45, "Forget thy people and thy father's house, and the king shall desire thy beauty," promising her the heavenly Bridegroom as a more-than-satisfactory recompense for her renunciation here and now.⁵⁷ In such

⁵³Acts of Paul and Thecla 5–6 (trans. from E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* [Philadelphia, 1965], 2:354–55).

⁵⁴On the popularity and wide diffusion of the Apocryphal Acts, especially the Acts of Paul and Thecla, see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht, 1950), 1:131; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia, 1983), pp. 90–96.

⁵⁵Ambrose *De virginibus* 1.11.63 (*PL* 16.217): "Si vincis domum, vincis saeculum."

⁵⁶For example, *Admonitio Augiensis* (*PLS* 1.1702).

⁵⁷Jerome *Ep.* 22.1.1; 25–26 (*CSEL* 54.143–44, 178–82).

literature—literature especially directed to young girls making the commitment to asceticism, it appears—the words describing the male lover in the Song of Songs were borrowed to depict Jesus as the one who will come to their chambers at night to embrace them.⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, however, goes the Latin authors one better, promising the faithful virgin that the bridegroom Jesus will be “hotter” (*sphodrotoros*) than any human husband she might have fancied.⁵⁹ Erotic fantasy, far from being anathema to ascetic discourse, lent it some of its driving force.

That the above exhortations represent propaganda of the most blatant sort is evident—which is not to say that it did not enjoy at least limited success in the late ancient Christian world. Its ideological import is especially manifest when we compare the view of marriage that is set forth in this ascetic literature to the legal situation of “real” women in later antiquity: the Fathers do not reflect the social and legal norms of “civil society,” but appeal to a bygone era and ancient customs, long since discarded in both law and “real life” (such as we can grasp them) in order to paint a highly repressive portrait of marriage for women. Roman law, by later antiquity, came closer to affording parity between men and women on such issues as property and divorce than most Western legal systems up to the modern era; the restrictive views the Fathers set forth on married women thus cannot be “blamed” on the social norms of the day but is their special, religiously oriented contribution. One would rarely infer from the church fathers’ writings that in their own era, women usually retained their property separate from their husband’s, could serve as legal guardians to their children, or could initiate divorce.⁶⁰ Nor would

⁵⁸It is striking how often this imagery appears in letters or treatises directed to young girls such as Eustochium or Demetrias (the recipient of Jerome’s *Ep.* 130; see esp. chap. 7 of that letter). For an interesting discussion, see Patricia Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome’s Letter to Eustochium,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 21–45.

⁵⁹John Chrysostom *Quod regulares feminae viris cohabitare non debeant* 9 (PG 47.532).

⁶⁰On changes in Roman law regarding such issues since the Republic, see Percy Ellwood Corbett, *The Roman Law of Marriage* (Oxford, 1930); Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington, IN, 1986); Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (n. 14 above); Jean Gaudemet, “Tendances nouvelles de la législation familiale au IV^e siècle,” in *Transformations et conflits au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C.*, Colloque organisé par la Fédération Internationale des Etudes Classiques, Bordeaux, 7. an 12. septembre 1970, *Antiquitas* 1, 29 (Bonn, 1978), pp. 187–207; Richard P. Saller, “*Familia, Domus*, and the Roman Conception of the Family,” *Phoenix* 38 (1984): 336–55, esp. 338–40; Yan Thomas, “The Division of the Sexes in Roman Law,” in *A History of Women: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. P. S. Pantel, trans. A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 83–137; Jill Harries, “‘Treasure in Heaven’: Property and Influence among Senators of Late Rome,” in *Marriage and Property*, ed. Elizabeth M. Craik (Aberdeen, 1991), pp. 54–70; Suzanne Dixon, “The

we gather that, due to limited life expectancy, many men at the age of marriage would no longer be in *patria potestas* (under the legal control of the male head of the family), due to the early demise of their own fathers, or that both male and female adult children might be *sui juris* (under their own legal recognizance).⁶¹ We would not readily guess that a father's inheritance (if no will were made to the contrary and if the father died intestate) would be apportioned to his legitimate children without regard to age or sex.⁶²

Quite the contrary: married Christian women are enjoined by the church fathers to "submit their heads" to their husbands, to spin, and to "keep their feet at home."⁶³ Some authors seem to yearn for "the good old days" when a man could supposedly kill his wife with impunity if she merely tasted some drops of wine. They extol nostalgically the early days of the Roman Republic when (so they claim) not one divorce occurred in a six-hundred-year period.⁶⁴ Lucretia and Dido are held up as exemplars of Christian chastity and monogamy—although their sui-

Marriage Alliance in the Roman Elite," *Journal of Family History* 10 (1985): 353–78; Beryl Rawson, "The Roman Family," pp. 1–57; J. A. Crook, "Women in Roman Succession," pp. 58–82, both in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Ithaca, NY, 1986); Philippe Antoine, *Le mariage: Droit canonique et coutumes africaines*, *Théologique Historique* 90 (Paris, 1992), chaps. 1–2 (on engagements). The various essays of Jean Gaudemet on marriage are collected in his *Sociétés et mariage*, *Recherches institutionnelles* 4 (Strasbourg, 1980), esp. pp. 46–103, 116–39. Also see the forthcoming book by Antti Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity*. Although Arjava reads Jerome *Ep.* 147.11; and John Chrysostom *De virginitate* 52.3, to mean that husbands in their time may have been reclaiming the ancient legal right summarily to kill a wife and her lover caught in the sex act (*Women and Law in Late Antiquity*, chap. 2), it seems to me that such expressions (in the absence of any legal evidence to support Arjava's claim) betoken these church fathers' rhetorical appeal to a past in which husbands had more power over their wives. For a discussion of the ideological nature of texts pertaining to adultery, see Amy Richlin, "Approaches to the Sources on Adultery at Rome," in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Helene P. Foley (New York, 1981), pp. 379–404. For a summary of developments as they affect the notion of "consent" to marriage, see my "'Adam's Only Companion': Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 21 (1986): 138–62, esp. 158–61, with numerous references on Roman marriage law.

⁶¹See Richard P. Saller, "Men's Age at Marriage and Its Consequences in the Roman Family," *Classical Philology* 82 (1987): esp. 322–34; on cautions about not overinterpreting *patria potestas*, in any event, see John A. Crook, "*Patria Potestas*," *Classical Quarterly* 17 (1967): 113–22.

⁶²Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, pp. 361, 381; Crook, "Women in Roman Succession."

⁶³Tertullian *De cultu feminarum* 2.13.7 (CCL 1.370). For a summary, with copious references, of Tertullian's views on marriage, see Claude Rambaux, *Tertullien face aux morales des trois premiers siècles* (Paris, 1979), pp. 204–58.

⁶⁴Tertullian *Apologeticum* 6.4 (CCL 1.97).

cides are not recommended, given the reevaluation of that deed in early Christian ethical writings.⁶⁵ The church fathers' depiction of married life is thus (in Brian Stock's term) "traditionalistic": they self-consciously affirmed the norms (or ideals) of the past in order to regulate present behavior.⁶⁶

Thus the patristic authors chastise women who dispose of their own money or property without the permission of their husbands⁶⁷—yet when a husband sold his wife's property against her will, the best that Augustine could recommend to her is that she "not be litigious."⁶⁸ He can also quote with approval his mother's alleged words to her friends, victims of wife battering, that they should not be surprised at their fates, since the marriage tables put a woman in subjection to her husband.⁶⁹ In a most telling merger of the financial with the sexual, John Chrysostom interprets the "becoming one (flesh)" text of Ephesians 5 to mean that brides should deposit their money in their husband's coffers—a striking example of social conservatism.⁷⁰ Basil of Caesarea's rules for his church include such items as that a wife is not to leave her husband even if he beats her and is an adulterer⁷¹—whereas if she were to stray sexually, she is to be repudiated immediately.⁷² (Basil at least has the good grace to admit that he is uneasy with this distinction between the fates of sexes, but, he concedes, this is "custom.")⁷³

Even the language of these texts makes marriage look as undesirable

⁶⁵Tertullian *De monogamia* 17.2 (CCL 2.1252); *De exhortatione castitatis* 13.3 (CCL 2.1034–35); Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.43; 46; 49 (PL 23.286. 287–88. 294); *Ep.* 79.7 (CSEL 55.96). On Augustine's nervousness about the exaltation of Lucretia's suicide, see *De civitate Dei* 1.19. For an interesting discussion of this material, see Dennis Trout, "Re-textualizing Lucretia: Cultural Subversion in the *City of God*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 53–70. The appeal to the good old days is a stock rhetorical device of pagan satirists and moralists (see Dixon, "The Marriage Alliance in the Roman Elite," p. 358); nonetheless, it accords but poorly with the Christian argument from "the difference in times," namely, that the morality of the Christian era is "higher" than that of either the ancient pagans or the ancient Israelites. Such argumentative incoherence provides a clue to the ideological construction of the Christian texts.

⁶⁶Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore, 1990), p. 164.

⁶⁷Augustine *Ep.* 262.4–8 passim (CSEL 57.624–27).

⁶⁸Augustine *Serm.* 392.4.4 (PL 39.1712).

⁶⁹Augustine *Confessiones* 9.9.19 (CCL 27.145). Although I suspect that Brent Shaw gives an overly harsh picture of matrons' situations on the basis of Augustine's discussion ("The Family in Late Antiquity" [n. 6 above], esp. pp. 28–32), Augustine doubtless had trouble with women's questions: see my "Theory and Practice in Late Ancient Asceticism: Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989): esp. pp. 37–46.

⁷⁰John Chrysostom *Hom.* 20 *Eph.* 9 (PG 62.148).

⁷¹Basil of Caesarea *Ep.* 188.9 (PG 32.677.680).

⁷²Basil of Caesarea *Ep.* 199.21 (PG 32.721).

⁷³Basil of Caesarea *Ep.* 199.21 (PG 32.721).

as possible. Thus the fathers sometimes refer to marriage as a “sale,”⁷⁴ or remind widows that in their first marriages, they had been “sold” as an *ancilla*, a servant, to a man.⁷⁵ Quite pointedly, Ambrose uses the word *contubernium*—which designated the informal, quasi-marital arrangements of slaves, who were not permitted legal marriage under Roman law—to describe the marriages of freeborn women.⁷⁶ His class-based demeaning of marriage, encapsulated in this one word, would not have been lost on his aristocratic audience.

There were, to be sure, many who did not warm to this antifamilial campaign. The profoundly antisocial implications of the ascetic message were registered with less ascetically inclined audiences: refusal to contribute one’s body to the upbuilding of civic life might not be viewed so much as an individual’s choice of an unusual “lifestyle” as a genuine threat to the reproduction of society.⁷⁷ In an era in which (so demographic studies suggest) every girl who lived to childbearing age would have had to produce about five children simply to keep the population constant, ascetic propaganda might sound decidedly threatening. In Peter Brown’s words, the debate over virginity could be construed as a “debate about the nature of human solidarity.”⁷⁸

And it was not only non-Christians who stood against the antifamilial campaign: opposition to the ascetic’s fervor could also come from within the Christian camp. Even within the New Testament period, some Christian writers, such as the author of the Pastoral Epistles, had urged a traditional ideal of marriage and wifely submission, perhaps to convince pagan “outsiders” that Christians were highly “respectable” folk. But the social landscape had changed by the later fourth century, when Christianity was the established religion and young people of the most “respectable”—indeed, aristocratic—families were those who rejected the domestic ideals of their elders.

⁷⁴Ambrose *De virginibus* 1.9.56 (PL 16.215).

⁷⁵[Anonymous] *De viduitate servanda* (PL 67.1097).

⁷⁶Ambrose *Exhortatio virginittatis* 6.35 (PL 16.361). Brent Shaw’s translation: “shackling up”; Shaw notes that slaves and freed persons probably did not think of their relationships in this pejorative fashion. See Brent D. Shaw, “The Cultural Meaning of Death: Age and Gender in the Roman Family,” in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller (n. 6 above), p. 88.

⁷⁷See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), pp. 6–7, citing the work of Bruce Frier, “Roman Life Expectancy: Ulpian’s Evidence,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982): 248. On the struggle for reproduction, also see Peter Garnsey, “Child Rearing in Ancient Italy,” in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller, pp. 48–65.

⁷⁸Peter Brown, “The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York, 1986), p. 436.

Many Christian authors of this era who champion renunciation testify to the fierce opposition that the ascetic's resolve met from fellow Christians. Ambrose thus declares, rather rhetorically, that he would give his life to defend a girl's choice of perpetual virginity against the violence of her relatives who would seek to tear her away from her "altar." Against the familial "attackers," he argues that if virgins "have free choice of a life-partner, may they not choose God?"⁷⁹ Jerome insists to a young female correspondent, recently widowed and without children, that she does not owe her allegiance to her "natural" father, in this case a Roman aristocrat who was pressing his daughter to remarry. "You are not his to whom you have been born, but His to whom you have been born again," Jerome informs her. He goes on to mock her presumed desire (and her father's wish) for children: does her father crave a small grandson to "crawl upon his chest and drool down his neck"?⁸⁰ Jerome also reports that his friend and patroness Paula's relatives argued against her lavish—in their eyes, excessive—Christian charities; when she resolved to leave Rome and adopt the monastic life in earnest, her brother, children, and other relatives are all said to have tried to argue her out of her decision.⁸¹ From the *Life of Malchus* to the *Life of Melania the Younger*, from the *Life of Theodore* to the *Life of Matrona*, parents and relatives—Christian ones, at that—are consistently represented as attempting to thwart the young ascetic's resolution.⁸² In part, some of the opposition may have been motivated by the fact that the would-be ascetic was the only surviving offspring—or one of possibly two surviving children—of her family: thus the decision for asceticism might well signal the end of the family line.⁸³ But a second, and related, factor is perhaps even more important: the fate of the family's patrimony.

⁷⁹Ambrose *De virginitate* 3.13, 5.26 (PL 16.283.286).

⁸⁰Jerome *Ep.* 54.4 (CSEL 54.466–70).

⁸¹Jerome *Ep.* 108.5–6 (CSEL 55.310–12).

⁸²Jerome *Vita Malchi* 3; Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae Iunioris* 1, 6, 10–12, 19; *Vita Pachomii* 37 (for the *Life of Theodore*); *Vita Matronae* 11 (PG 116.929–32). On the probable ages of these young women at marriage, see M. K. Hopkins, "The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage," *Population Studies* 18 (1965): 309–27; for an "upping" of the age, possibly a "lower-class" pattern, see Brent D. Shaw, "The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage: Some Reconsiderations," *Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987): 30–46. For a lively discussion of Matrona, see Eva Catafyglotu Topping, "St. Matrona and Her Friends: Sisterhood in Byzantium," in *Kathēgētria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey* (Camberley, 1988), pp. 211–24.

⁸³Olympias, e.g., was an only child; Melania the Younger may or may not have had a brother (if so, he is totally ignored in her *Vita*); the Anician heiress Demetrias had one brother. For an interesting study of the decline in natality among the senatorial aristocracy and the imperial families of the fourth century, see Robert Etienne, "La démographie des familles impériales et sénatoriales au IV^e siècle après J.-C.," in *Transformation et conflits*

Familial opposition to the would-be ascetic's resolve becomes highly understandable when we consider the vast sums of money that stood to devolve upon ecclesiastical and charitable projects rather than entering the family's coffers.⁸⁴ Here was one arena—a woman's ability to will her property to whom she chose—in which the less restrictive norms of later Roman law manifestly benefited the church: in this case, not surprisingly, we find no nostalgic appeal by the fathers to the "good old days" in which women would have been less able to disperse their funds as they saw fit. The examples of Olympias, of Melania the Younger, and of Demetrias suggest that once the female ascetic could counter the laws forbidding the "under-aged" (i.e., those under twenty-five) to disperse family property without a special exemption, or laws allowing relatives to declare them prodigal or demented,⁸⁵ they were free to disperse vast amounts of money and property as they chose—in these cases, to the church, to Christian charities, and to ascetic programs.

To "translate" the sums mentioned in ancient texts into any modern equivalent is notoriously difficult (some might think futile). One method of calculating ancient fortunes rests on an estimation of how many people could have been supported at subsistence level, given what we know of ancient food prices.⁸⁶ Take Olympias's donations to the church

au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C. (n. 60 above), pp. 133–67. Etienne concludes, "The upper classes assassinated themselves" (p. 142).

⁸⁴Property could be bequeathed to the church from A.D. 321 on (*Codex Theodosianus* [hereafter, CT] 16.2.4).

⁸⁵See CT 2.17.1; *Codex Justinianus* 2.44 (45). 1–2. Men could apply for the exemption regarding age—the *venia aetatis*—at twenty and women, at eighteen; people of senatorial rank had to apply through the city prefect (CT 2.17.1–2). On prodigality and dementia, see *Justiniani Digesta* 27.10.1.3. In the case of Melania the Younger, Honorius himself is said finally to have intervened to block her relatives' attempt to keep all the property in the family (*Vita Melaniae Iunioris* 12 [SC 90.150]). In the case of Olympias, Theodosius I ordered that the young widow's property be placed under guardianship of the city prefect (of Constantinople) until she was thirty (*Vita Olympiadis* 4 [SC 13 bis.412]). Various evidence suggests that Olympias must have been about twenty when this occurred. Olympias's marriage probably reflects the aristocratic pattern of marriage of a young girl to a considerably older man: her husband of short duration, Nebridius, was appointed prefect of Constantinople in 386 (A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, eds., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* [hereafter, PLRE], vol. 1 [Cambridge, 1971], 1.620). Thus the marriage probably conformed to the aristocratic mode sketched by Brent Shaw, "The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage," p. 44: "The upper-class marriage, therefore, would have been characterized by a wider age-gap between husband and wife, with all the implications that hiatus would have for reproduction, conjugal relations, widowhood and remarriage, and the devolution of property."

⁸⁶See Roger S. Bagnall, *Currency and Inflation in Fourth Century Egypt*, Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists, suppl. 5 (Chico, CA, 1985), esp. the prices and salaries listed on pp. 61–72; Richard Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 4–5, and his "Costs, Outlays and Summae

of Constantinople: her biographer mentions ten thousand pounds of gold and twenty thousand pounds of silver—an amount that would have sustained around 211,000 poor people—and these donations do not include her extensive real estate, which she also gave.⁸⁷ Even allowing for hagiographic excess, as we must, we can better understand why in the late fourth century the emperor Theodosius I tried to force her into a second marriage with one of his relatives after she was widowed at about age twenty. Among her many contributions to the church at Constantinople was the monastery she built which housed 250 nuns.⁸⁸

Melania the Younger furnishes another example of a woman whose contributions to Christian causes startle the modern reader. According to her *Vita*, her annual income was 120,000 “pieces of gold”; assuming that these were gold *solidi* (1,666 pounds of gold), her income would have taken care of around twenty-nine thousand people a year.⁸⁹ The gifts that she and her ascetic husband Pinianus gave to the church and to monasteries are likewise mind-boggling: gifts of money that would have supported over thirty-eight thousand people for a year,⁹⁰ plus monasteries that they built and endowed.⁹¹

A third example—even more risky, since it rests on historical guesswork rather than on direct textual evidence—concerns the dowry of the Anician heiress Demetrias that her grandmother and mother allowed her to use for Christian purposes when she rejected marriage.⁹² Since the Anicii were arguably the wealthiest family of the late Roman Empire, it is probably safe to assume that they enjoyed the annual

Honorariae from Roman Africa,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 30 (1962): 75, in which Duncan-Jones emphasizes the difficulties of calculating purchasing power that corresponds to modern price structures. For a survey, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Norman, OK, 1964), 1:438–48; on prices of clothing, 2:848–50. Labor costs in relation to the price of food are calculated by Colin Clark and Margaret Haswell in *Economics and Subsistence Agriculture*, 4th ed. (London, 1970), esp. chaps. 1, 4, 11. I thank Keith Hopkins for assistance with these details.

⁸⁷ *Vita Olympiadis* 5 (SC 13 bis.416).

⁸⁸ *Vita Olympiadis* 3, 13, 6 (SC 13 bis.410.412.434.418.420).

⁸⁹ The Latin *Vita* (15) ascribes the income to Melania; the Greek *Vita* (15), to Pinianus her husband: *chrouson myriadas dōdeka*.

⁹⁰ Gerontius *Vita Melaniae Iunioris* 22 (SC 90.156.158): 1,388 and 625 pounds of gold, respectively.

⁹¹ Gerontius *Vita Melaniae Iunioris* 22, 41, 29 (SC 90, 172.204.206.220.222). A nice contrast with Melania's donation to private religious building is provided by her ancestor Publius Caecionius Caecina Albinus, who as *consularis Numidiae* in the mid-360s engaged in so much public building (basilicas, theaters, etc.) that he was honored in eighteen different inscriptions: see *PLRE*, 1:34–35, for a list.

⁹² Jerome *Ep.* 130.7 (CSEL 56.182).

income Olympiodorus ascribes to the highest level of senatorial families: four thousand pounds of gold—enough to care for more than seventy thousand people.⁹³ If we accept Richard Saller's estimate that approximately one year's income was an acceptable dowry for an aristocratic Roman woman,⁹⁴ we get an entirely new perspective on why Jerome exclaimed upon the occasion of Demetrias's renunciation, "Every church in Africa danced for joy. . . . Every island between Africa and Italy was full of it. . . . Then Italy put off her mourning and the ruined walls of Rome resumed in part their ancient splendor."⁹⁵

Even ascetically inclined writers, however, refrained from taking their denigration of marriage and the family too far. Thus they were eager to assert that virtue can exist within marriage—although it is easier to devote oneself to Christian perfection outside its bonds, they nonetheless add.⁹⁶ They note that the Bible furnished numerous examples of the married who were praised: Priscilla in the New Testament, who led the male teacher Apollos on the road to Christian truth; Enoch, who was said to please God even after he fathered a child; Noah, who, according to John Chrysostom, repressed the fires of lust in begetting three sons; Jacob, loved by his wives and slaves—and "nothing is more precious than such love," Chrysostom proclaims: thus the marriage bed is not in itself blameworthy.⁹⁷ Such biblical support for marriage was noted in detail by Jerome's Christian opponent Jovinian in the closing years of the fourth century: it is rather Jerome who must strain for Old Testament examples of the virgin or the celibate to argue his case.⁹⁸ Earlier, Clement of Alexandria, writing at the turn of the third century in praise of marriage against its denigration by some Gnostics, characterizes marriage as a school for virtue: the man who bears the burdens of wife and children is witnessing to his Christian conviction.⁹⁹ The church father Augustine especially is known for his defense of marriage: he describes the "goods" of marriage—offspring, fidelity, and the "sacramental bond"—in glow-

⁹³Olympiodorus frag. 44, in Photius *Bibliotheca* 80 (PG 103.280).

⁹⁴Richard Saller, "Roman Dowry and the Devolution of Property in the Principate," *Classical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 101–2.

⁹⁵Jerome *Ep.* 130.6 (CSEL 56.181). Jerome writes after the Goths' sack of Rome in 410.

⁹⁶For example, John Chrysostom *Adversus oppugnatores eorum qui vitam monasticam inducunt* 3.15 (PG 47.375–76); [Anonymous] *Virginitate laus* 10 (PL 30.176).

⁹⁷Concerning Priscilla, see John Chrysostom *De virginitate* 47.2 (SC 125.264–66); cf. *Salutate Priscillam et Aquilam* (PG 51.195–208). See John Chrysostom *Hom. 21 Gen.* 4 (PG 53.180–81) for Enoch, *Hom. 24 Gen.* 1–2 (PG 53.207) for Noah, *Hom. 49 Acta* 4 (PG 60.353) for Jacob, and *Hom. 51 Matt.* 5 (PG 58.516) about the marriage bed.

⁹⁸For example, Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.25 (PL 23.255).

⁹⁹Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 3.12.79.5 (GCS 15.231).

ing terms,¹⁰⁰ and warns virgins not to presume that they are better than Sarah and Abraham. Indeed, the patriarchs were more virtuous than many Christians of his own time, Augustine alleges, since their procreative activities were undertaken only in obedience to God's command and they fulfilled them "without lust."¹⁰¹

Moreover, several patristic writers give us pleasing portraits of the marriages of their own parents, or of the parents of friends, in which the matches are described as "a union of virtue rather than bodies," or as a "community of virtue no less than one of cohabitation."¹⁰² Yet even in such praises of marriage we detect an ascetic note: marriage is always to be used "with moderation," but if so used, will not prevent the married person from winning a front place in the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁰³ As John Chrysostom puts it, husbands are to live more or less like ascetic practitioners: the only point of difference is that they have wives, albeit (in Paul's phrase from 1 Cor. 7:29) "as if they had them not."¹⁰⁴ Ascetic Christians such as Paulinus of Nola might even write *epithalamia*, poems celebrating marriage, for their fellow Christians—although after 231 lines of praising the couple, Paulinus apparently could not resist suggesting (albeit delicately) that they not sleep together, but take vows of sexual renunciation then and there.¹⁰⁵ Here it is important to recall that moderation and sexual restraint, even within marriage, was a common theme among philosophically minded pagan writers of late antiquity, so its presence in Christian works—in sharpened form—comes as no surprise.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰Augustine *De bono coniugali* 3.3–7.7 (CSEL 41.190–97); *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 1.10.11, 17.19 (CSEL 42.222.231).

¹⁰¹Augustine *De bono coniugali* 22.27, 13.15, 23.31 (CSEL 41.221–23.207–8.226). That the patriarchs engaged in sexual relations without lust runs up against Augustine's later theme, developed during the Pelagian controversy, that lust attends all sexual intercourse since the time of Adam and Eve's sin. The argument that virgins should not deem themselves better than the patriarchs appears to have arisen with Helvidius (see Jerome *Adversus Helvidium* 20).

¹⁰²Gregory Nazianzen *Oratio* 18.7 (PG 35.993), *Oratio* 43.9 (PG 36.504).

¹⁰³John Chrysostom *Hom.* 7 *Heb.* 4 (PG 63.68).

¹⁰⁴John Chrysostom *Hom.* 7 *Heb.* 4 (PG 63.68).

¹⁰⁵Paulinus of Nola *Carmen* 25 (CSEL 30.245).

¹⁰⁶See Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1986), esp. pts. 2, 5. In general, the early Fathers stand resolutely against such accepted pagan practices as abortion and child exposure, representing themselves as far more caring for both the unborn and the newly born than their pagan counterparts. For example, Tertullian *Ad nationes* 1.16.10–12 (CCL 1.35); *Apologeticum* 9, 6–8 (CCL 1.102–30); Justin *Apologia prima* 27 (PG 6.369.373); Athenagoras, *Libellus pro Christianis* 35 (*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literatur* 4.2, 45–46). See Emiel Eyben, "Family Planning in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *Ancient Society* 11/12 (1980/1981): 5–82,

In addition, Christian critics of excessive ascetic enthusiasm developed other arguments to further their cause. One such played upon the pagan theme that childbearing was a social duty, necessary for the upbuilding of the civic order: in this argument, the failure to reproduce would lead to the decline of the human race and to the collapse of the world.¹⁰⁷ It could also be asked why God had created humans in two sexes if he had not intended them to reproduce.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, did not the numerous marriages mentioned in the Bible suggest that God approved of the married state—and not just at the beginning of the world, when the population needed building up?¹⁰⁹ Last, if the Pastoral Epistles assume that even priests and bishops will be married, how much more the author of those books must have expected Christians not in the clergy to be.¹¹⁰

Christian champions of marriage also could critique the claim that the sin in the Garden of Eden led to, and cast a pall over, marriage. One writer who argued against the enduring effects of the first sin for married life was Julian of Eclanum, the last and probably the sharpest opponent that Augustine ever faced. Over against Augustine's position that the original sin which brought lust into the world forever left a negative mark on the sexual relations of even Christian couples and transferred that guilt to every fetus conceived, Julian took quite a different line. He stressed the disastrous implications for marriage that Augustine's claim entailed: that the inevitability of sin's transfer through the sex act implied

esp. 62 ff.; Keith Hopkins, "Contraception in the Roman Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8 (1965–66): 124–51; Evelyne Patlagean, "Sur la limitation de la fécondité dans la haute époque byzantine," *Annales E. S. C.* 24 (1969): 1353–70; Ruth Oldenziel, "The Historiography of Infanticide in Antiquity," in *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society*, ed. Josine Blok and Peter Mason (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 87–107; Donald Engels, "The Problem of Female Infanticide in the Greco-Roman World," *Classical Philology* 75 (1980): 112–20; William V. Harris, "The Theoretical Possibility of Extensive Infanticide in the Graeco-Roman World," *Classical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 114–16. One wonders if this concern for newborn children relates to Brent Shaw's finding that Christian funerary inscriptions place great emphasis on descent, rather than ascent, within the nuclear family: parents dedicate inscriptions to their dead children with some frequency; see his "Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire," *Historia* 33 (1984): esp. 472, 475–78, and also "The Cultural Meaning of Death," in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ Ambrose *De virginitate* 7.35 (PL 16.288); [Anonymous] *De castitate* 10.12, 13.1 (PLS 1.1487.1491–92); Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.36 (PL 23.271).

¹⁰⁸ [Anonymous] *De castitate* 14.2 (PLS 1.1495).

¹⁰⁹ [Anonymous] *De castitate* 11.1 (PLS 1.1489); Jovinian, in Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.5 (PL 23.225–28).

¹¹⁰ Jovinian, in Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.34 (PL 23.268).

that marriage and childbearing were under the power of the devil.¹¹¹ Thus some voices from late ancient Christianity upheld the priority of marriage over against the ascetic onslaught; although they were “voices crying in the wilderness” amid the burgeoning production of proascetic texts in this period, the sentiments they uttered may well have reflected the views of the majority of “ordinary” Christians, who continued to marry and reproduce.

Indeed, some recent scholars have called our attention to the limitations on the success that ascetic propaganda enjoyed in late antiquity and have warned us not to magnify its influence. Michelle Salzman, writing about the Christianization of the Roman aristocracy, argues that the ascetic movement contributed very little to the process of Christianization: “asceticism was a dead-end in terms of conversion. By turning away from this world and denying the importance of creating or maintaining family ties, these women apparently minimized their impact on the conversion of their families.”¹¹² David Hunter, in a series of articles and a forthcoming book on Jovinian, has collected important evidence regarding various Christian writers in late antiquity who were less than enthusiastic for the ascetic cause.¹¹³ Nonetheless, we should not underestimate the impact of ascetic ideals among the higher aristocracy and the imperial families of the fourth century: fecundity rates, affected in part by the sexual renunciations of some of its members, were not high enough to sustain many of these families.¹¹⁴

What are we to make of the sharpness of the church fathers’ ascetic rhetoric? I think that it stems in part from their ineffectiveness in bringing about swift societal change, from their inability to shift Roman law in the direction of a rigorous sexual morality. In their attempt to enforce a “single standard” of sexual morality for both men and women, or to prohibit divorce, they simply failed—at least for the time being.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹¹ Julian of Eclanum *Ad Florum*, in Augustine *Opus imperfectum* 1.62, 2.24 (CSEL 85¹.58.177–79). For discussions of Julian’s position, see Brown, *The Body and Society* (n. 77 above), pp. 408–19; Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York, 1988), chap. 6; and my “Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine’s Manichean Past,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 367–401.

¹¹² Michelle Renee Salzman, “Aristocratic Women: Conductors of Christianity in the Fourth Century,” *Helios* 16 (1989): 217.

¹¹³ David Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve: A Little-Known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989): 283–99; and his forthcoming book on Jovinian.

¹¹⁴ Etienne, “La démographie des familles impériales et sénatoriales au IV^e siècle après J.-C.” (n. 83 above), pp. 133–67, esp. pp. 138–42.

¹¹⁵ For a good overview of the Christian attempt to change the law, and its limited success, see Gaudemet, “Tendances nouvelles de la législation familiale au IV^e siècle” (n. 60 above), pp. 187–207; and n. 118 below.

most they could do was to hold over their Christian audiences the threat that even if Roman law did not punish a man's sexual relation with any woman but his wife, God would.¹¹⁶ "The laws of Caesar are different from those of Christ; Papinianus commands one thing, our own Paul another," Jerome intones.¹¹⁷ Likewise, the ease of divorce under civil law was deeply disturbing to these writers,¹¹⁸ as was the allowance of closer-kin marriage by secular authorities than some church fathers thought proper.¹¹⁹ Given their failure to make either social norms or the law more rigorously ascetic, the best they could hope for was that young people who were not going to embrace the ascetic life would marry young and stay faithful to each other all their days.¹²⁰

Yet this legal failure must be balanced with a fair assessment of the

¹¹⁶John Chrysostom *Hom. 5 I Thess.* 2 (PG 62.425); Augustine *De adulterinis coniugis* 2.8.7 (CSEL 41.389–90); *Serm.* 392.3.3 (PL 39.1711). For an interesting argument that such strictures harmed Christian women by putting them at greater risk of multiple pregnancies, see Aline Rousselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome," in *A History of Women*, ed. P. S. Pantel (n. 60 above), p. 333.

¹¹⁷Jerome *Ep.* 77.2.3 (CSEL 55.39). For a running debate on whether any early church fathers countenanced remarriage for either party after divorce, see Pierre Nautin, "Divorce et remariage dans la tradition de l'église latine," *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* 62 (1974): 7–54; and Henri Crouzel, "Les Pères de l'Eglise ont-ils permis le remariage après séparation?" "Remarriage after Divorce in the Primitive Church: A propos of a Recent Book," "Le remariage après séparation pour adultère selon les Pères latins," "Divorce et remariage dans l'Eglise primitive: Quelques réflexions de méthodologie historique," and "Un nouvel essai pour prouver l'acceptation des secondes nocces après divorce dans l'Eglise primitive," all in Crouzel's *Mariage et divorce, célibat et caractère sacerdotaux dans l'église ancienne*, *Etudes d'histoire du culte et des institutions chrétiennes* 2 (Torino, 1982).

¹¹⁸Augustine *De bono coniugali* 7.7, 8.7 (CSEL 41.196–97); Jerome *Ep.* 54.3 (CSEL 54.39). On the Fathers' lack of success in influencing Imperial laws on divorce, see Antti Arjava, "Divorce in Later Roman Law," *Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica* 22 (1988): 5–21; and Hans Julius Wolff, "Doctrinal Trends in Post-Classical Roman Marriage Law," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung* 67 (1950): esp. 268, 276, 278–79, 296–98, 311, 318–19; Dixon, *The Roman Family* (n. 7 above), p. 81; Mireille Corbier, "Divorce and Adoption as Roman Familial Strategies," in *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome*, ed. Beryl Rawson (n. 9 above), pp. 47–78; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (n. 14 above), pp. 319, 463–64; see also Roger S. Bagnall, "Church, State and Divorce in Late Roman Egypt," in *Florilegium Columbianum: Essays in Honor of P. O. Kristeller*, ed. K.-L. Selig and R. Somerville (New York, 1987), pp. 41–61. For a comprehensive view of the church fathers' opposition to divorce, see Henri Crouzel, *L'église primitive face au divorce du premier au cinquième siècle*, *Théologie historique* 13 (Paris, 1970); see also Jean Gaudemet, "L'interprétation du principe d'indissolubilité du mariage chrétien au cours du premier millénaire," in his *Sociétés et mariage* (n. 60 above), esp. pp. 230–56.

¹¹⁹Ambrose *Ep.* 59 (to Paternus) (PL 16.1234–37). On the subject, see Brent D. Shaw and Richard P. Saller, "Close-Kin Marriage in Roman Society," *Man* 19 (1984): 432–43.

¹²⁰John Chrysostom *Hom. 59 Matt.* 7 (PG 58.583), *Hom. 5 I Thess.* 3 (PG 62.426), *Hom. 1 Anna* 6 (PG 54.642), *De inani gloria et de educandis liberis* 81 (in Basileios K. Exarchos, ed., *Über Hoffart und Kindererziehung* [Munich, 1955], pp. 82–83). Recall Au-

ascetic ideology's "success": thousands of Christians adopted the ascetic regime, diverting their energies and fortunes from families and secular pursuits to religious institutions and charities. Moreover, through the ascetic program, women were offered a mode of life other than that of domesticity and childbearing: they now had an option that carried with it benefits in the form of education, travel, and leadership. Older generations of historians tended to overlook both the contributions of ascetically minded women and the benefits that ascetic women might receive from their renunciations. From a feminist perspective, the new opportunities for women that asceticism provided might prompt us to proclaim its "success": somewhat paradoxically, the propagandistic campaign waged by the church fathers that stood to benefit them also produced benefits for women willing to make the commitment to asceticism.

But are terms such as "success" and "failure" actually very helpful in assessing such evidence as provided by the texts I have been discussing, for do not "success" and "failure" suggest that there is some "reality" lying behind these texts that, given a few more archaeological or documentary discoveries, we might be able to measure without ambiguity? Rather, we have to admit that for the kinds of texts I have been discussing, even more than for other sorts of historical evidence, the literary remains are not a copy of some extraliterary domain of "the real."

On the most obvious level, the documents I have been citing were composed by males whose educational achievements allowed them to move in an extremely small circle of elites. Moreover, they were bishops and monastic leaders who stood to benefit from the renunciations of their "sheep": these writings, in other words, are not entirely disinterested. But more: the documents that constitute my evidence are ideological and rhetorical through and through. As a historian whose primary materials are constituted by texts such as these, I do not imagine that I am uncovering the "reality" of late ancient Christianity. My task, as I conceive it, is to push and jab at these documents to make them yield up their ideological content, to make manifest the ways in which their authors seek to present their highly constructed arguments as "natural" interpretations, obvious to all "rational" people. Although many patristics scholars still write as if they believed that they were getting at "the thing itself," I am more disposed to register Michel de Certeau's claim that historical reasoning lies not in the province of "science" but of "ethics."¹²¹

gustine's regret that he had not been encouraged to marry and raise children, rather than taking a concubine (*Confessiones* 2.2.3 [CCL 27.18]).

¹²¹ Michel de Certeau, "History: Science and Fiction," in his *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1986), p. 220.

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Theory and Practice in Late Ancient Asceticism: Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine

Author(s): Elizabeth A. Clark

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THEORY AND PRACTICE IN LATE ANCIENT ASCETICISM

Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine

Elizabeth A. Clark

A decade ago, I pondered how Jerome and John Chrysostom, leading theoreticians and practitioners of asceticism in late ancient Christendom, squared their ascetic theories with their practice of friendships with women. One important factor linking theory and practice, I concluded, was that the women as well as the men were ascetics who had divested themselves of often considerable property, family, and sexual relations, indeed of sexual identification itself. For these circles, asceticism meant an erasure of sexual difference between males and females, of social difference between aristocrats (the women) and nonaristocrats (the men), and a possibility for intellectual intersexual friendships of a kind difficult if not impossible otherwise to sustain in late ancient society. For our contemporaries, the practice of friendships between men and women in these circles provides a pleasing counterpart to the harshness of Jerome's and Chrysostom's marital and sexual theories.¹

When I argued this case, I did not yet have Augustine in mind as a subject for investigation. If I had, I would have confronted different evidence, requiring a different explanation, than that I had amassed for Jerome and John Chrysostom. Whereas the ascetics Jerome and Chrysostom articulated highly antisexual, antimarital, and antireproductive strategies in their theological writings, they at the same time cultivated close relationships with women; the ascetic Augustine, by contrast, who developed *relatively*—I emphasize *relatively*—prosexual, promarital, and proreproductive theories, had no close female friends in his mature years. To the contrary, Augustine's relationships with actual women in his adult life, as revealed in his correspondence, were more frequently characterized by misunderstanding and suspicion than by friendly encouragement. Although he occasionally needed the

I thank members of the Triangle Area Reading Group on Medieval and Renaissance Women (especially Judith Bennett) and two anonymous readers of this essay for their comments. I also thank Peter Brown and Alan Cameron for specific suggestions.

¹ Elizabeth A. Clark, "Friendship Between the Sexes: Classical Theory and Christian Practice," in Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends: Essays and Translations*, Studies in Women and Religion 2 (New York/Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1979), 35–106.

assistance of aristocratic women,² he was not able—or did not wish—to sustain long-lasting relationships with them as did Jerome and Chrysostom. What factors might explain this difference?

Several approaches to this question suggest themselves, but they are not equally convincing. The first—the least satisfactory—appeals to an individualistic explanation: the psychologies of the men involved. The second looks to the theological climate in which the three men elaborated their views. The third examines the social-historical situations of the male authors and their female correspondents—for it is the letters written by Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine that contain the primary evidence.

The first approach, that of personal psychology, holds limited explanatory power for the divergences just noted, both because we know so little about the families or sexual developments of Jerome and John Chrysostom, and because many modern understandings of these topics rest on assumptions that have dubious applicability to antiquity. The silence of the sources poses a first, obvious problem for the historian. Jerome, for example, makes almost no mention of his parents in his many letters. His silence might suggest that he had not enjoyed good relationships with them, or, less significantly, might merely reflect his indifference to family concerns.³ As for his sexual development, Jerome bemoans his inability to claim the title of virgin, having “fallen” in his youth. He also confesses that despite the severe ascetic practices he adopted during his early retreat to the Syrian desert, visions of dancing girls still floated through his head.⁴ These slim and rather innocent data do not, I think, warrant J.N.D. Kelly’s conclusion that Jerome was “strongly sexed but also, because of his convictions, strongly repressed as well.”⁵

From Chrysostom, on the other hand, we have no reference to *any* early sexual interest.⁶ Chrysostom briefly delayed his entry to the priesthood both

² See the new letter of Augustine to Fabiola in Rome, soliciting her support against Antoninus of Fussala, *Ep. 20** (CSEL 88.94–111); commentary in Henry Chadwick, “New Letters of St. Augustine,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983): 440–45; Serge Lancel, “Notes complémentaires, Lettre 20*,” *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 46B: *Lettres 1*–29** (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1987), 516–20. Essays on *Ep. 20** by W. Friend, S. Lancel, and C. Munier are found in *Les Lettres de Saint Augustin découvertes par Johannes Divjak. Communications présentées au colloque des 20 et 21 Septembre 1982* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1983), 251–99.

³ Jerome mentions his father by name (Eusebius) in *De viris illustribus* 135 (PL 23.755), and affirms that he was a Christian in the *praefatio* to his Latin translation of Job (PL 28.1142). In *Ep. 82.2* (CSEL 55.109), Jerome suggests that his home was a Christian one. In *Ep. 66.1–2* (CSEL 54.665), he mentions commissioning his brother to sell the remains of the family property.

⁴ Jerome, *Epp.* 49 (48). 20; 22.7 (CSEL 54.385, 153).

⁵ J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 91.

⁶ Chrysostom’s description of his deep attachment to his friend Basil in *De sacerdotio*

from his sense of personal unworthiness and out of deference to his widowed mother. That he admired and loved her seems evident from his writings,⁷ and thus provides counterevidence to the thesis of Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson that all ascetics must have suffered from harsh and unloving parents.⁸ In any event, the literature pertaining to Jerome and Chrysostom provides limited information from which the psychohistorian might construct a psychological portrait that could explain their later theological and personal predilections.

The data for Augustine are richer: there is no denying this claim. Thanks to the *Confessions*, we know considerably more about Augustine's childhood and youth—at least as retrospectively constructed⁹—than we do about those of Jerome and Chrysostom. Reading the *Confessions*, we are struck by the deep regard in which Augustine held his mother Monica,¹⁰ and are perhaps equally struck by his inattention to his father. (That his father was not a baptised Christian during Augustine's youth, nor did he foster the ascetic virtues so central to Augustine's later theology, may account in part for this slight.)¹¹ We feel Augustine's poignant suffering when, upon his engagement to a ten-year-old girl of an appropriate social class, he separated from his beloved concubine of perhaps fifteen years, the mother of his adored son Adeodatus. Although he wrote about this separation fifteen years after the event, his remembered pain is palpable: "The woman with whom I had been

1.1–4 (PG 48.623–24) might lead moderns to suspect a homosexual tendency—as might Augustine's *Confessiones* 3.1.1 (CCL 27.27) (how did friendship become "muddled with lewdness"?) and 4.4.7–4.6.11 (CCL 27.43–46), if we had no other evidence about Augustine. Different understandings of male friendship in antiquity and different rhetorical expressions concerning its power should, however, caution us from leaping to such conclusions.

⁷ John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 1.5 (PG 48.624–25). The entire treatise argues that the priesthood is so lofty and fearsome that Chrysostom felt inadequate to its demands. See the famous story of Libanius's(?) remark on hearing that Chrysostom's mother had lived in widowhood for twenty years: "What women there are among the Christians!" Chrysostom tells the story in *Ad viduam juniorem* 2 (PG 48.601).

⁸ J. Moussaieff Masson, "The Psychology of the Ascetic," *Journal of Asian Studies* 35 (1976): 623. Testimony concerning the relationships between Augustine and his mother, and between Macrina and Gregory of Nyssa and their mother, provide further disconfirmation from the patristic era.

⁹ On the dangers of completely trusting Augustine's retrospections, see Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 3–34.

¹⁰ On Monica, see Augustine, *Confessiones*, especially 1.11.17; 3.11.19–20; 5.9.16–17; 6.1.1; 8.12.30; 9.8.17–9.13.36 (CCL 27.9–10, 37–38, 65–67, 73–74, 131–32, 142–54). Augustine in the *Confessions*, of course, was recording his mature construction of the centrality of his mother's influence on his life. Whether his mother's presence had in actuality been a dominant feature of his youth remains less certain.

¹¹ Augustine testifies that his father was a pagan when Augustine was small, was ambitious for his son, and was unfaithful and hot-tempered toward his mother (*Confessiones* 1.11.17; 2.3.5–6; 9.9.19–20 [CSEL 27.10, 19–20, 145–46]). The father died when Augustine was seventeen: *Confessiones* 3.4.7 (CCL 27.30).

living was torn from my side as an obstacle to my marriage and this was a blow which crushed my heart to bleeding, because I loved her dearly."¹²

Yet how are we to interpret the ongoing role of these memories in Augustine's life? If Augustine's devotion to at least two women shows him capable of deep feeling, how might we account for the absence of friendships with women in his mature years? Are we to imagine that relationships with his mother and his forever-unnamed concubine satisfied his desire for association with women for the rest of his life? Or conversely, that the emotions evoked by these relationships were so powerful that, as an ascetic, he was wary of ever again allowing such attachments to bind his heart and mind? The latter is suggested by Possidius, Augustine's biographer, who says that Augustine was so scrupulous in his dealings with women, he would not allow female relatives to stay in his episcopal residence nor would he interview women without a chaperone.¹³ It is also suggested by Augustine's apparent lack of association with women during the early years of his episcopate, if we infer correctly from the complete absence of letters to women until 408 A.D.

Augustine's "psychology" becomes even more problematic when we consider one other fact: that he had at least one sister, absent from the *Confessions*, whom he mentions only in passing after she died. Her absence from the book suggests that she played no part in his spiritual or intellectual development. We discover that she was the head of a group of women religious whose community was in Hippo Regius, where Augustine was bishop. Only when a problem arose among the nuns after his sister's death does Augustine make reference to her. That this was a flesh-and-blood sister, not a "sister in Christ," is confirmed by Augustine's biographer, Possidius.¹⁴ The sister's monastery provided an ideal setting in which Augustine could have cultivated close but nonthreatening relationships with ascetic women, had he so desired. That he did not so desire seems evident.

In his youth, Augustine deeply valued friendships and participated in a virtual cult of friendship with his young male associates;¹⁵ thus his failure to cultivate the bonds of *amicitia* with ascetic women once he committed himself to the priestly and ascetic life seems all the more problematic. Recently, Gerald Bonner has puzzled over the same question and noted that Augustine apparently enjoyed best the life ordered along the exclusively male lines of "a college common-room or a military mess."¹⁶ My own

¹² The fifteen-year period is calculated by Emile Schmitt. *Le Mariage chrétien dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin. Une théologie baptismale de la vie conjugale* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1983), 26. See Augustine, *Confessiones* 6.15.25 (CSEL 27.90); the moving translation is by R.S. Pine-Coffin in the Penguin volume of Augustine's *Confessions*.

¹³ Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 26 (PL 32.55).

¹⁴ Augustine, *Epp.* 210–11 (CSEL 57.353–71); Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 26 (PL 32.55).

¹⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones* 2.5.10; 4.4.7–9; 4.6.11; 4.8.13; 6.12.21; 6.14.24 (CCL 27.22, 43–44, 45–46, 46–47, 87–88, 89–90).

¹⁶ Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Attitudes to Women and 'Amicitia,'" *Homo Spiritualis*.

conclusion is that investigations of Augustine's psyche, however provocative, offer only limited assistance in explaining the different pattern of ascetic theory and female friendship that he exemplifies.

Psychological "explanations" of the behavior and attitudes of these long-dead theologians are flawed for a second reason as well: Freudian-inspired assumptions of "normal" psychosexual development and family relations are dubiously applied to the ancients. Since both feminist critics of Freud and advocates of a revisionist Freudianism place far more emphasis on the social construction of gender identity than did Freud,¹⁷ historians of antiquity would do well to assume a similar modesty in assessing how family structures and sexual expectations affected their subjects' psychological development. Our notions of normalcy and deviance cannot be readily applied to a society in which, for example, slaves who were subject to the violence and sexual whims of their owners were the primary caretakers of the owners' children, or in which a thirty-year-old man's engagement to a ten-year-old girl—Augustine's case—raised no eyebrows. Thus the questionable applicability of psychoanalytical theory, as well as the paucity of our sources, precludes an adequate psychohistorical explanation of these theologians.

More help, I think, is provided by an examination of the theological, social, and historical circumstances in which Augustine worked, as contrasted with those of Jerome and Chrysostom. To begin, the theological climate in which Augustine developed his theories of marriage and sexuality differed from those in which Jerome or Chrysostom originally elaborated theirs; indeed, Augustine's views were strongly influenced by the attacks on Jerome's antimarital and antisexual propaganda. Although all three church fathers construct theologies that undergird an ascetic preference, their theologies carry somewhat different ascetic messages.

According to Chrysostom, sexual reproduction was not part of God's plan for the first humans: He created Adam and Eve as virgins, and virgins they were presumably intended to stay. Only after the first sin did God permit

Festgabe für Luc Verheijen, OSA, ed. C. Mayer and K.H. Chelius (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1987), 270.

¹⁷ The twentieth-century women's movement has provided some strong critics of Freudian theory, from Simone de Beauvoir to Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, and Dorothy Dinnerstein. Even revisionist interpreters of Freud, such as Juliet Mitchell, who reject a predominantly social interpretation of gender construction, are quick to point out that "psychoanalysis is not a recommendation for a patriarchal society, but an analysis of one," that it is not because of women's "'natural' procreative possibilities but on account of their cultural utilization as exchange-objects . . . that women acquire their feminine definition" (Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* [New York: Pantheon, 1974], xv, 407–8.) Recently some fascinating work has been done on Hellenistic and Roman families. See, for example, *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Judith P. Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and the work of Susan Treggiari, Richard Saller, and Brent Shaw.

them to engage in sexual intercourse for the sake of reproduction, and this as a compensation for the immortality they had lost by their sin: "Where death is, there is marriage," Chrysostom ominously intones. He postulates that if God had wished for there to be more than two humans in paradise, he could have arranged for their multiplication by nonsexual means, just as he had multiplied the angels. Had Adam and Eve preserved their innocence, no bearing of children as we know it would ever have occurred.¹⁸

The message carried by Chrysostom's theology of creation is clear: Virginity is the best means by which to recapture the condition of Paradise before the Fall and anticipate the angelic world to which we shall be assumed after death, a world in which there shall be neither sexual desire nor marriage. In the present age, marriage is simply a concession to human weakness and impurity, or, as Chrysostom more dramatically puts it, to those who are still "caught up in their passions, who desire to live the life of swine and be ruined in brothels."¹⁹ Although Chrysostom's phrasing is rhetorically excessive, the substance of his interpretation is not exceptional for Eastern theologians of his era: Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of Eden and the afterlife, for example, is similarly nonbodily in character.²⁰ That these views were not considered deviant in late fourth-century Eastern Christianity is suggested by the relative absence of protest they occasioned—in contrast to the furor that erupted in the Western church when comparable positions were advocated.

Jerome paints a similar picture to Chrysostom's of the original human condition, although he does not offer so developed a theology of Paradise. For Jerome, too, the condition of Adam and Eve in Paradise was virginal; only after their sin and their expulsion from Eden did they cease to be virgins. Thus, marriage was instituted only after the Fall. Although Jerome admits that virginity was not given as a *commandment* but only as a *counsel* in the New Testament, he nonetheless reminds his readers that the only animals who entered Noah's ark two-by-two, that is, as sexual mates, were the unclean ones. Jerome's conclusion from his reading of Genesis 1–3 is as clear as Chrysostom's: Virginity is the preferred mode of human life, the one-hundredfold harvest of the Parable of the Sower, compared to the sixtyfold harvest of widowhood, and the thirtyfold harvest of marriage.²¹ Jerome's

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, *De virginitate* 14.3, 5, 6 (SC 125.140, 142); *Hom. 20 Gen.* 1 (PG 53.167); *Hom. 18 Gen.* 4 (PG 53.154); *Propter fornicationes* 3 (PG 51.213); *De virginitate* 14.6; 17.5 (SC 125.142, 144, 154); *Hom. 15 Gen.* 4 (PG 53.123); *De virginitate* 14.3, 6 (SC 125.140, 142, 144).

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 68 Matt.* 3 (PG 58.643–44); *De virginitate* 11.1; 27.2 (SC 125.126, 178); *Hom. 6 Col.* 4 (PG 62.342); *Hom. 18 Gen.* 4 (PG 153); *De virginitate* 15.2; 19.2 (SC 125.146, 158).

²⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate*, esp. 12–14 (SC 119.398–444).

²¹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.4, 16, 12 (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 26), 16 (PL 23.225, 246, 237, 246); *Epp.* 29.2; 66.2; 123.8 (CSEL 54.353, 648; CSEL 56.82); *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.3 (PL 23.223).

scheme, however, met with a far more negative reception in the West than Chrysostom's had in the East, and in this difference we find one key to why Augustine's recommendation of marriage was more generous than that of either Chrysostom or Jerome.

In the early 390s, Jerome's ascetic views came under sharp attack. To some Western Christians, Jerome and other ascetic enthusiasts were covert "Manicheans,"²² a slanderous code name denoting not an actual disciple of the Persian teacher Mani, but those who disparaged God's creation, especially the human body with its reproductive capacities. The chief attack emanated from the Christian writer Jovinian, who believed that baptism not only erased sin, but rendered all the baptized of equal merit. An ascetic should not, on the basis of his or her renunciation alone, condescend to married childbearers. Why, Jovinian asked, should Christian ascetics fancy that they are superior to the Hebrew patriarchs and their wives, who acted in accordance with God's command to "reproduce and multiply"?²³

Augustine's theology of Eden must be set squarely against the backdrop of the debate between Jerome and Jovinian in the 390s. How to give a more positive assessment of marriage and reproduction, without necessarily putting marriage on a par with virginity, was the problem Augustine inherited from this debate. Before Augustine was theologically prepared for this task, however, he had undergone a dramatic change in his own world view.²⁴

As is well known, Augustine had been a Manichean—an actual member of the Manichean church—for about nine years in his youth.²⁵ When he abandoned Manicheism and began to embrace Catholic Christianity, he learned to read the Old Testament with more spiritual eyes than his Manichean training had led him to imagine possible. (It had been a Manichean ploy to discredit the Old Testament by ridiculing its anthropomorphism, the

²² Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.3, 5 (PL 23.223, 225–27); Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.23.28; 2.5.15 (PL 44.458, 444–45).

²³ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.16, 5 (PL 23.246, 225–28); cf. *Adversus Helvidium* 20 (PL 23.212). The questions are addressed by Augustine, *De bono coniugali* 22.27 (CSEL 41.221–23). See Augustine's report on Jovinian's questions in *Retractiones* 2.22 (48) (CCL 57.107–8).

²⁴ See my essay, "Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve: Interpretations of Genesis 1–3 in the Later Latin Fathers," in E. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, Studies in Women and Religion 20 (Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 366–68; also see David G. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 45–64.

²⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones* 3.11.20; 4.1.1 (CCL 27.38, 40); *Contra epistolam fundamenti* 10 (CSEL 25.206); *De moribus Manichaeorum* 68 (19) (PL 32.1374); *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 18.34 (PL 32.1326). Pierre Courcelle has argued for a Manichean period of at least ten years: *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Editions E. de Boccard, 1968), 78.

peccadilloes of the patriarchs, and so forth.)²⁶ The convert Augustine's first exegesis of the book of Genesis, directed against the Manichean disparagement of Hebrew Scripture, resulted in a highly spiritualized and allegorical interpretation of the creation stories. *On Genesis against the Manichees*, composed in 388–389, announced the author's intent to provide a "figurative and enigmatic interpretation of the text."²⁷ So "figurative" is Augustine's interpretation that the words of Genesis 1:28 ("reproduce and multiply") are taken to mean only spiritual, not fleshly, union. Like Jerome and Chrysostom, Augustine here posits that fleshly fecundity came into existence only after the Fall. The reference to the woman's "bringing forth," according to Augustine, means that the first couple will "bring forth" good works.²⁸

Only in 401 and thereafter did Augustine grasp the difficulties of his figurative approach: namely, that the spiritualized interpretation of Genesis 1–3 he had developed to counter Manichean jibes at Old Testament crudities now left him and other Christians open, paradoxically, to the charge of "Manicheanism," that is, the disparagement of the human body that had been created by God. Thus during the first years of the fifth century, in response to the debate between Jerome and Jovinian, Augustine modified his earlier views in ways that had important consequences for his developing theology: He now interprets marriage and reproduction as "goods," on the one hand, and increasingly "despiritualizes" his interpretation of Genesis in favor of an earthier reading of the text, on the other. These tasks he undertakes in his treatises *On the Good of Marriage*, composed in 401, and *On Genesis According to the Letter*, which he began shortly thereafter. The order of composition suggests that Augustine's exegesis of Genesis 1–3 was decisively influenced by his changing estimation of the worth of marriage.²⁹

On the Good of Marriage is Augustine's attempt to provide a better resolution to the debate between Jerome and Jovinian a decade earlier. He wants to reprove Jovinian (by claiming the superiority of virginity to marriage) but not fall prey to the charges of "Manicheanism" directed at Jerome. In this work, Augustine repeatedly proclaims marriage to be a "good" that God intended for the human race: We are by nature social beings, whose deepest natural inclinations prompt us to keep company with each other. How Adam and Eve would have reproduced if sin had not occurred, Augustine does not yet know—but he posits that a sinless sexual act *might* have

²⁶ Augustine, *Confessiones* 6.4 (CCL 27.76–77); for Manichean ridicule of the Old Testament, see Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 4.1; 6.1; 22.1,3,5 (PL 42.217, 227, 243, 401, 402, 403).

²⁷ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.2.3 (PL 34.197).

²⁸ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.19.30 (PL 34.187). Not even the fish and birds are allowed to reproduce physically: 1.23.39 (PL 34.191–92). On the woman's "bringing forth," 2.11.15 (PL 34.204).

²⁹ Augustine, *Retractiones* 2.22 (48); 24 (50) (CCL 57.107–9) for the order; also see *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.7.12 (PL 34.397), for Augustine's comment that he had "recently" (*nuper*) written *De bono coniugali*.

been possible in Eden. Although, like Jerome and John Chrysostom, he affirms that celibacy is “higher” than marriage, he is far more careful than they to uphold God’s blessing on marriage. In *On the Good of Marriage*, however, Augustine does not develop an interpretation of Genesis 1:28, “reproduce and multiply.”³⁰

This he begins to do a few years later in *On Genesis According to the Letter*. As we move with Augustine from book to book of this work, we can trace the progressive modification of his earlier spiritualized interpretation of Genesis. By book 3 of *On Genesis According to the Letter*, he is asking if the first human did or did not have a mortal body, and what the point of reproduction would have been if death, arising from sin, had not entered the world. He considers whether Adam and Eve could have had sexual union not motivated by lust, but does not know how to answer his own question. By book 9 of the work, however, he has not only answered the question, he has arrived at the position that would carry him through his next two decades of theologizing, namely, that Adam and Eve would have reproduced in Eden even if they had remained sinless.³¹ This they would have done without lust. They would have commanded the movement of their sexual organs, which would have complied with the ease that now attends commands to our feet and other parts.³² These views are the very ones that much later inform Augustine’s debate against the Pelagians in *On Marriage and Concupiscence* and *Against Julian*, as well as the *City of God*.³³ Moreover, in the latter work Augustine paints a glowing picture of the harmonious companionate marriage Adam and Eve would have enjoyed in the Garden of Eden if they had not sinned—a very different sketch of marriage than that depicted in the numerous treatises of Jerome and Chrysostom which enumerate the woes of married women, from the nausea of pregnancy to the insubordination of servants and ill-treatment by husbands.³⁴

³⁰ Augustine, *De bono coniugali* 1.1; 2.2; 8.8; 9.9; 23.28; 26.35 (CSEL 41.187–88, 188–89, 198–201, 223–24, 229–30).

³¹ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 3.21.33; 9.3.6, 9.9.14 (PL 34.293, 395, 398). Even though Augustine here emphasizes Eve’s reproductive role rather than her role as Adam’s companion, I read this early emphasis in the context of Augustine’s development of an earthier exegesis of Genesis 1–2 that contributes to his growing recognition of the goodness of marriage. For a less positive assessment of the passage, see Bonner, “Augustine’s Attitude,” 260–61.

³² Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.10.16, 9.10.18 (PL 34.398, 399).

³³ Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.31.53 (PL 44.467–68); *Contra Julianum* 3.7.15, 25, 27 (PL 44.709, 731–32); *De civitate Dei* 14.23, 26, (CCL 48.444–46, 449–50).

³⁴ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.26 (CCL 48.449–50). For a fuller explication of Augustine’s claim that Eve was to be Adam’s companion, see Elizabeth A. Clark, “Adam’s Only Companion’: Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 21 (1986): 139–62. Compare Jerome, *Ep.* 54.4 (CSEL 54.468–70); *Adversus Helvidium* 20 (PL 23.214); *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.47 (for men) (PL 23.289, 291); John Chrysostom, *De virginitate* 37.2–3; 40.1, 3; 57.1–4 (SC 125.220, 222, 232, 234, 306–12); *De non iterando coniugio* 6 (SC 138.192).

In his final struggle with the Pelagian, Julian of Eclanum, almost two decades later, Augustine conceded one—but only one—point: that there perhaps could have been libido in a sinless Eden, albeit one controlled by the will and quite unlike the raging lust we today experience.³⁵ Such views, however quaint they may appear to us, afford a dramatic contrast with those of Jerome and John Chrysostom, who could not envision an Eden that allowed for sexual desire or intercourse. To be sure, in the controversy with Pelagians, Augustine found his own views on marriage constantly attacked as “Manichean,” because of his theory that original sin passed through the sexual act. Although I think that Augustine’s refutation of the Pelagian charge was not completely successful,³⁶ his theory of marriage and sexual functioning can doubtless be labelled more positive than those of Jerome and Chrysostom. Thus the theological climate in which Augustine wrote encouraged more support for marriage and reproduction than had that of a decade or two earlier, when Jerome and John Chrysostom developed their theories.

Did Augustine’s more moderate views on marriage and sexual relations find a correlate in more positive attitudes toward actual flesh-and-blood women? The answer appears, puzzlingly, to be no. Despite Augustine’s sensitive, even “progressive,” words about the marriage relationship—for example, that marriage was meant to be companionship, or that Joseph and Mary had a genuine marriage, despite their lack of sexual association, because they had a spiritual bond³⁷—his actual relationships with women, as we infer them from his letters, provide little support for the hypothesis that a *theory* of companionate marriage necessarily correlates with the *practice* of companionly relationships with women, even within the bounds of ascetic propriety. The percentage of letters addressed to women by Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom is itself telling: Whereas 34 percent of Jerome’s letters and 23 percent of Chrysostom’s are addressed to women, only 7 percent of Augustine’s are so designated.³⁸ Moreover, the warm emotion we

³⁵ Augustine, *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum* 1.68.5; cf. 2.122 (CSEL 85¹.75, 253); *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 1.10 (5); 1.31 (15); 1.35(17) (CSEL 60.431, 448, 451–52); Ep. 6*.5.1; 6.7.2 (CSEL 88. 34, 35–36).

³⁶ Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 1.3 (1), 4 (2) (CSEL 60.424–25); *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.35 (20) (CSEL 42.289); *Opus imperfectum* 1.27.66; 2.27.2, 202; 3.10 (CSEL 85¹.23.64, 181, 314, 355); 4.47; 6.41 (PL 45.1365, 1604) and many other places. See my essay, “Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine’s Manichean Past,” in Clark, *Ascetic Piety*, 291–349; also in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

³⁷ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.11, cf. 26 (CCL 48.443, 449); and *De bono coniugali* 3.3 (CSEL 41.190–91).

³⁸ The percentages are calculated as follows: the letters included in the collections that were written by others were subtracted from the total and the number of letters written to women in their own right (not as part of a married couple) were counted. The results are as follows: for Jerome, there are either 116 or 117 letters total (depending on whether Epistle 46 to Marcella is judged to have been written by Jerome rather than by Paula and

find expressed in Jerome's and Chrysostom's letters to women is rarely present in Augustine's. Some of this difference, I think, can be accounted for by the circumstances under which the three men composed their correspondence, and I turn now to an examination of these circumstances.

Chrysostom's letters to women all date from the period of his exile, after he was ousted from the bishopric of Constantinople and was suffering the tedium of banishment to the hinterlands of Armenia. Many of the women to whom he wrote were deaconesses, or had worked with him in some capacity connected with church life when he was bishop of Constantinople. Now, in his unhappy solitude, he urged them to write more frequently, to tell him the news about themselves and those dear to them, although the reader soon notes that Chrysostom had almost nothing to report back about himself. In language that cuts through the formal conventions of polite letter writing in late antiquity, he reaffirms the affection that he felt for these women. In his seventeen extant letters to the deaconess Olympias, whom he saw daily in Constantinople and who almost single-handedly supported the ecclesiastical operations of the city, he sings her praises most fulsomely.³⁹ From our perspective, it appears that Chrysostom had too *much* time on his hands, in contrast to the harried bishop of Hippo Regius; writing letters to his admirers filled lonely hours and forged a link to his happier past.

As for Jerome, he had lived in mental and emotional intimacy with his circle of Roman women for three years. He describes their relationship thus: "Our studies made for constant association, which ripened into familiarity, which in turn produced mutual confidence,"⁴⁰ a near-classic ancient definition of friendship. When Jerome left Rome in 385 for Palestine, he was followed by his closest female friend Paula and her ascetically minded

Eustochium), 40 of which are written to women; for John Chrysostom, there are 236 letters total, 54 of which were written to women; for Augustine, 257 letters total, including those in the Divjak edition of new letters, of which 19 are written to women in their own right. I have not included treatises dedicated to women; if I had, the percentage of materials to women by Jerome would be even further elevated. My count comes out slightly higher than that of Aline Rousselle, *Porneia, De la maîtrise du corps à la privation sensorielle II-IV siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 231 n.8.

³⁹ For Chrysostom's references to the boredom of life in rural Armenia, see (e.g.) his *Epp.* 34, 43, 94, 98, 105, 178, 185; *Ep. ad Olympiadem* 6 (= Migne 13). On this period of Chrysostom's life, see Chrysostomus Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, vol. 2, *Constantinople*, trans. M. Gonzaga (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960), chaps. 32-33. For a sample of Chrysostom's affectionate letters to women, see *Epp.* 18 and 227 to Carteria; 39 and 105 to Chalcidia; 43 to Bassiana; 52, 133, and 179 to Adolia; 96 to Amprulea; 99 to Asyncratia; 192 to Onesicratia (PG 52.624, 736, 651-52, 664, 633, 637, 691-92, 713, 659-60, 661, 719). On Olympias, see *Vita Olympiadis* 8 (SC 13bis, 422); Palladius, *Dialogus de vita S. Joannis Chrysostomi* 61 (Coleman-Norton, 109-10); *Vita Olympiadis* 5; 7; 8 (SC 13bis, 414, 416, 420, 422). For Chrysostom's praise of Olympias, see especially *Epp.* 8 Malingrey (= Migne 2), 12 Malingrey (= Migne 6), and 14 Malingrey (= Migne 16).

⁴⁰ Jerome, *Ep.* 45.2.2 (CSEL 54.324).

daughter, Eustochium. With them he founded monasteries for men and women in Bethlehem and had daily contact for the rest of their lives.⁴¹ To friends in Rome such as Marcella, he wrote both before and after he left the city, expressing his love and admiration.⁴² On special occasions, Jerome's letters became virtual treatises, for example, his letter to Eustochium upon her decision for lifelong virginity, or his letter to Paula's daughter-in-law on how to raise an infant daughter, an enterprise with which Jerome certainly had no experience, but for which he nonetheless confidently provides advice.⁴³ Indeed, so often and so fervently did Jerome write to women that he felt compelled to defend his practice—in a letter to a woman!⁴⁴

When we compare Jerome's relationship with female friends to Chrysostom's, we notice some similar patterns. Both men had enjoyed close associations with the women for at least a few years before they wrote most of the letters that constitute our evidence. Moreover, most of the women had made their ascetic renunciations before they met either Jerome or Chrysostom. Olympias, for example, had attempted—despite resistance from governmental authorities—to espouse the ascetic life for a decade or more before Chrysostom became bishop of Constantinople in early 398. She had already waged a successful battle for the right to disperse her own property before Chrysostom ever met her. Thus, there could be no grounds for suspecting that Chrysostom had lured her to an ascetic life with the hope of extracting her extraordinary wealth for the benefit of the church. And although, judging from the anonymously authored *Life of Olympias*, its heroine was somewhat indiscriminate in entertaining Chrysostom's enemies as well as his friends,⁴⁵ there is no evidence that she was attracted to any heretical or schismatic group that Chrysostom would have considered problematic. Thus the factors that were to cloud some of Augustine's relationships with women are absent from Chrysostom's circumstances.

Similar circumstances surround Jerome's relationships with Paula, Marcella, Lea, and Asella: They had already made their ascetic commitments before they encountered Jerome upon his arrival in Rome in 382.⁴⁶ Although

⁴¹ See Jerome, *Ep.* 108 for Paula's life, especially sections 6, 14, and 20. In *De viris illustribus* 135 (PL 23.759), Jerome confesses that he doesn't know how many letters he has sent to Paula and Eustochium, because he writes to them daily.

⁴² On Marcella's life, see Jerome, *Ep.* 127. The letters of Jerome addressed to her are numbers 23–29, 32, 34, 37, 38, 40–44, 59; letter 46 to Marcella also appears to be written by Jerome, not by Paula and Eustochium. Of Jerome's 40 letters to women, 24 were written before he left Rome. Unfortunately, all of Jerome's letters from his first seven years in Palestine are lost.

⁴³ Jerome, *Epp.* 22, 107 to Laeta.

⁴⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 65(1) to Principia.

⁴⁵ *Vita Olympiadis* 5, 14 (SC 13bis, 414, 416, 436, 438); Palladius, *Dialogus* 56–58 (Coleman-Norton, 99–102).

⁴⁶ For Paula, see Jerome, *Ep.* 108.5–6 (CSEL 55.310–12); for Marcella, *Ep.* 127.5–6 (CSEL 56.149–50); on Lea, *Ep.* 23.2 (CSEL 54.212); on Asella, *Ep.* 24.2–3 (CSEL 54.215).

Jerome was blamed for encouraging Paula's recently widowed daughter Blesilla in an excessive asceticism that brought on her death, the record suggests it was the daughter's ardent enthusiasm, not Jerome's interest in her property, that prompted her mortifications.⁴⁷ Moreover, Jerome's female friends appear as the pillars of Catholic orthodoxy. When an Origenist tried to trick Paula with hard questions about the resurrection of the body, she calmly turned the questioner over to Jerome, who (by his own account) gave the imposter a verbal drubbing.⁴⁸ And Marcella engaged in public debate against Origenist sympathizers in Rome, a performance Jerome scarcely would have lauded had it not been in an antiheretical cause.⁴⁹

Augustine's circumstances, by contrast, appear quite different. None of the women with whom he was to carry on a correspondence in his mature life was known to him before he became a bishop; in fact, most of them appeared on his horizon a decade or more after he was raised to the episcopate.⁵⁰ They sought him out; he did not, for the most part, seek them. In addition, Augustine became embroiled in ecclesiastical and theological disputes with these women; Jerome and Chrysostom, for their part, had not faced such problems with female friends. These differences, I think, shed some light on the cool tone of Augustine's letters to women.

The first extant dated letter of Augustine to a woman in her own right—Italice—was written in 408 A.D., twelve years after he had become a bishop. From Augustine's two letters to Italice, we learn that she had been recently widowed and that she lived in Rome. When her husband died, she wrote to Augustine for consolation. In his reply, Augustine instructs her on how Christians will "see" God—a discussion pertaining to God's incorporeality that had arisen in the Origenist controversy a few years earlier. Italice also wrote to Augustine concerning a house situated next to Augustine's church in Hippo Regius over which some problem, unclear from the correspondence,

⁴⁷ Jerome, *Epp.* 38–39 (CSEL 54.289–308).

⁴⁸ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.23 (CSEL 55.339–41).

⁴⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 127.9–10 (CSEL 56.152–53).

⁵⁰ The first datable letters from Augustine containing a female addressee are those to Paulinus of Nola and his wife Therasia in the middle and late 390s. The content of these letters makes clear that they are meant for Paulinus, not for Therasia. See Augustine, *Epp.* 31, 42, 45, 80, 95; *Epp.* 149 and 186 are to Paulinus alone. For the complex matter of Paulinus and Augustine's correspondence, see Pierre Fabre, *Essai sur la chronologie l'oeuvre de Saint Paulin de Nole*. Publications de la faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, fasc. 109 (Paris: 'Les Belles Lettres', 1948), and his *Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne*. Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 167 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1949).

Peter Brown has suggested (in private correspondence of 10/11/88) that the relative ages of Jerome and Augustine in the 380s may help account for Jerome's willingness (and Augustine's unwillingness) to nurture friendships with women. (For the argument that Jerome was born in 331, see Kelly, 1, 337–39). Chrysostom, like Augustine, was already a bishop when he acquired his well-known women friends.

had arisen. Whatever the precise issue, it appears that Italica had intervened on Augustine's behalf regarding the disputed property.⁵¹

Although we know little about Italica, we are fortunate to have a letter addressed to her by John Chrysostom just a few years before Augustine's. Chrysostom, like Augustine, was a stranger to Italica, yet his letter differs greatly in tone. He first repeats Paul's praise of women contained in the letter the apostle wrote to Christians living in Italica's city (Rome). According to Chrysostom, Paul's words illustrate how in divine combats, women can show themselves even more courageous than men. Like those strong women of yore, Italica is praised for her Christian commitment. She is lauded for having worked to end the tribulations that Chrysostom says have desolated the churches of the East—probably a reference to Italica's efforts to ensure that Chrysostom's representatives, hastening from Constantinople to Innocent I in Rome, would receive a sympathetic hearing for his case. Christians like herself, who do not flinch before peril and sacrifice in order to restore peace, will receive a magnificent reward, Chrysostom assures her.⁵²

When Augustine writes to Italica, however, the tone cools. In his first letter to her, dated to 408 (the letter of consolation upon her husband's death), Augustine warns Italica not to grieve as do the heathen who have no hope; rather, she should remember that she will meet her spouse in heaven. Reminding Italica that, in any case, she didn't know her husband as well as he knew himself, Augustine launches into a lengthy theological discourse about what it means to "see" God.⁵³

In his second preserved letter to Italica, regarding the mysterious matter of the house, he delivers a thinly veiled reproof for not having informed him about the situation. He would prefer to know what had transpired, even if the report was disturbing: better to "weep with those that weep" than remain ignorant, he asserts. In these epistles, his first preserved letters addressed to a woman, Augustine expresses none of the affection and admiration that mark Jerome's and Chrysostom's letters to women.⁵⁴

Moreover, Augustine's approach did not change significantly even when he wrote to women he *did* know. At the beginning of the second decade of

⁵¹ Augustine, *Epp.* 92.1–2; 99.1; 92.3–6 (CSEL 34.436–38, 533, 438–44). On issues of the Origenist controversy, see Pierre Lardet, Introduction to *Saint Jérôme, Apologie contre Rufin*. SC 303 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1983), 1*–75*; Maurice Villain, "Rufin d'Aquilée—La querelle autour d'Origène," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 27 (1937): 5–37, 165–95; Kelly, *Jerome*, chaps. 18, 20–22, among other discussions. For a discussion of God's "form" in relation to the controversy, see Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.11 (PG 67.1544–45). On the disputed property, see Augustine, *Ep.* 99.1 (CSEL 34.533).

⁵² John Chrysostom, *Ep.* 170 (PG 52.709–10); the letter dates from his exile. On supporters of Chrysostom pleading his case in Rome, see Palladius, *Dialogus* 8–15 (Coleman-Norton, 7–22); Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.26 (PG 67.1584–89).

⁵³ Augustine, *Ep.* 92.1–2 (CSEL 34.436–37).

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Ep.* 99.1 (PG 34.533–34). Augustine does, however, write to them about theological topics, a fact that suggests he did not scorn their intelligence. Cf. Bonner, 260.

the fifth century, he met for the first time women of the highest Roman aristocracy,⁵⁵ women who *could* have provided him with an equivalent circle of ascetic female friends to those gathered around Jerome and John Chrysostom. Augustine's budding friendships, however, soon disintegrated in a cloud of suspicion. The stories of his failed relations with these women command our attention and our interest.

The first known incident that involved Augustine the bishop with aristocratic women concerned Melania the Younger and her mother Albina. Albina, a member of the Ceionii Rufii and daughter of a Roman prefect,⁵⁶ was the sister of Volusianus, whose pagan skepticism provided Augustine with a notable opportunity—unsuccessfully realized—to win a highly placed pagan for the Christian faith.⁵⁷ Albina, her daughter Melania the Younger, and Pinianus, Melania's husband (with whom she had already taken a vow of chastity) had like other aristocrats fled from Rome at the time of the Gothic invasion. Arriving at their North African estates, they sold some of their property in Numidia, Mauretania, and Africa Proconsularis, donating the proceeds to Christian charity. They then settled on their estate near

⁵⁵ I have found no convincing evidence that Augustine knew any aristocratic women in Rome; according to *Confessiones* 5.9–13, his Roman friends were Manicheans. Augustine himself testifies that he knew the Anician women first by letter (*Ep.* 188.1.1 [CSEL 57.119]). Since Italica had young children when she and Augustine corresponded in 408–9, it is rather unlikely that Augustine knew her twenty years earlier in Italy. (On the early age of childbearing for Roman aristocratic women, see Keith Hopkins, "The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage," *Population Studies* 18 [1965]: 309–27). The editors of *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, 1980), 1.465–66; 2.634, suggest she was perhaps the mother of the Anicia Italica whose name appears on a lead pipe from Ostia. Since Augustine writes in both extant letters to Italica that he "greet[s] again" (*resaluto*) her sons (*Epp.* 92.4; 99.3 [CSEL 34.444, 535]), he perhaps had earlier correspondence with her. The identity of Hermogenianus, the addressee of Augustine's first letter, dating from 386, is also in doubt. Since Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius was probably too young, in 386, to have read Augustine's *Contra academicos* (see Claudian's *In consulatum Olybrii et Probini*), the remaining aristocratic candidates are Claudius Hermogenianus Caesarius, *praefectus urbis Romae* in 374, who was a pagan, and Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, praetorian prefect of the East in 378 and consul in 379, who was a Christian, and the father of Augustine's correspondent Anicia Faltonia Proba (see *PLRE* 1.171–72, 640–42 for the textual and inscriptional evidence). However, Augustine's breezy tone in *Ep.* 1, lacking any sign of deference to his addressee, makes it more likely that Hermogenianus was someone closer to his own age and situation than men who held the ranks noted above in the 370s. Moreover, I am reminded by Alan Cameron that Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius was known as "Olybrius," not "Hermogenianus" (private correspondence of 7/12/87; see Cameron's "Polyonymy in the Late Roman Aristocracy: The Case of Petronius Probus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 [1985]: 164–82, esp. 173–75).

⁵⁶ See stemma of the Ceionii Rufii in *PLRE* 1.1138; also 1.33.

⁵⁷ See Augustine's *Epistles* 135–38 for the discussion; also see André Chastagnol, "Le Sénateur Volusien et la conversion d'une famille de l'aristocratie romaine au Bas-Empire," *Revue des Etudes Anciennes* 58 (1956): 241–53. For his ultimate conversion by his niece, Melania the Younger, see *Vita Melania Junioris* 53–55 (SC 90.230–38).

Thagaste, Augustine's birthplace. When they inquired of Augustine, his old friend bishop Alypius of Thagaste, and bishop Aurelius of Carthage how best to use the money derived from the liquidations, they were advised to found and endow monasteries. They donated so extensively to the impoverished town of Thagaste that its bishop, Alypius, became the envy of other African bishops, according to Melania's biography.⁵⁸

Their very generosity was undoubtedly the factor that prompted the unpleasant scene described in Augustine's correspondence. The people of Hippo Regius, Augustine's see, clamored for Pinian's ordination to the priesthood, no doubt imagining that their municipality might, like Thagaste, be enriched through his munificence. Pinian, who had shown scarcely any calling to the spiritual life to begin with, let alone to the priesthood, was thoroughly frightened by the event and vowed, in a moment of desperate compromise, that he would consider Hippo his home if he were not pressed into the priesthood.⁵⁹

Augustine's letters on this affair (epistles 125 and 126) cast unfavorable light on all the parties involved. Although Pinian was most likely guilty of some dissimulation in offering his vow to live in Hippo, Augustine appears in an even worse light: He was suspected by both Albina and Melania the Younger of having less-than-spiritual motives at heart. Albina hinted that it was not only the people of Hippo, but also their bishop, who had interest in the wealth that might come to them if Pinian became their priest. Augustine attempts to counter the suspicion—regarding both his flock and himself—by testifying that when he gave his own patrimony, “a few small fields,” to the church at his birthplace of Thagaste, his congregation at Hippo Regius did not envy the donation but admired Augustine all the more for his “disinterest” in money matters. Likewise, he argues, the people of Hippo love Pinian for his spiritual virtues, not for the financial rewards he might bring to their town. In these letters, Augustine veers between not wanting to believe that Albina had made such insinuations about his motives, and attempting to clear himself from her charges. But Albina was not the only offended party: Melania the Younger was annoyed as well. We are told that she resented Augustine's eagerness to have Pinian swear an oath that he would regard Hippo as his home. When Melania objected to Augustine's volunteering himself as a witness to a written statement of Pinian's hastily offered vow, the bishop only reluctantly left off his testifying signature.⁶⁰ In this case, it

⁵⁸ Gerontius, *Vita Melania Junioris* 6; 20; 21 (SC 90.136, 168, 170); Augustine, *Confessiones* 2.3.5; 4.7.12 (CCL 27.19, 46); Gerontius, *Vita Melania Junioris* 20; 21 (SC 90.168, 170, 172).

⁵⁹ Gerontius, *Vita Melania Junioris* 1; 4; 8; 9 (SC 90.132, 140, 142, 144). Augustine says of Pinian that he had “a strong natural capacity for enjoying this world” (*Ep.* 126.7 [CSEL 44.13]); Augustine, *Epp.* 125.3; 126.1, 3 (CSEL 44.5, 8, 9–10).

⁶⁰ Augustine, *Epp.* 125.4.1–2 (CSEL 44.6–7, 3); 126.7, 8–9, 5 (CSEL 44.12–13, 13–15, 11).

appears that Albina and her family—unlike Chrysostom's confidante, Olympias—were still in the process of renouncing their property and bristled at any hint that bishops might cast hungry eyes on their wealth.

This inauspicious beginning of Augustine's relationship with Albina and her family was clouded even further by the family's support of and association with alleged heretics: in the past, with Origenists (through Melania the Younger's paternal grandmother, Melania the Elder and her monastic companion, Rufinus, in Jerusalem),⁶¹ and in the present with Pelagians. Indeed, in the event concerning Pinian's near-ordination, the emissary between Pinian and Augustine was Pinian's good friend, Timasius, an acknowledged disciple of Pelagius.⁶² Peter Brown has suggested that Augustine's reluctance to attack Pelagius outright by name before 415 had to do with the presence of this highly placed group of Pelagian sympathizers in North Africa during these years.⁶³ And when they resettled in Palestine, Albina, Melania the Younger, and Pinian met with Pelagius himself in 418; after the meeting they wrote to Augustine that, in their presence, Pelagius had abjured "Pelagian" opinions. Augustine replied that their attempt to rehabilitate Pelagius was not satisfactory, and composed for the trio his treatise *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*.⁶⁴ Although they sent respectful greetings to Augustine via Jerome in 419,⁶⁵ there is no further correspondence between them. Thus both monetary and theological difficulties appear to have soured the incipient friendship between Augustine and Albina's family.

A second circle of aristocratic women whom Augustine came to know in North Africa, whence they had fled Alaric's attack on Rome, were the women of the *gens Anicia*: Anicia Faltonia Proba, widow of the powerful plutocrat Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus; her daughter-in-law, Anicia Juliana, the recent widow of Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, and Juliana's daughter, Demetrias, who achieved much fame in Christian circles when, in 413, she renounced her impending marriage and took a vow of lifelong virginity.⁶⁶ The early correspondence between Augustine and the Anician women portended a warm future relationship: They too, would have been fitting counterparts to the aristocratic women of Jerome's and John Chrysostom's circles.

The first letter of Augustine to the Anician women is addressed to Proba, the grandmother, and dates to 412. Proba had asked Augustine to compose a

⁶¹ See Elizabeth Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Studies in Women and Religion 14 (New York/Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 141–43, for a discussion of the Origenist connections.

⁶² Augustine, *Ep.* 126.6 (CSEL 44.12).

⁶³ Peter Brown, "The Patrons of Pelagius," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 21 (1970): 65 (reprinted in Brown's *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine* [London: Faber and Faber, 1972], 217–18).

⁶⁴ Augustine, *De gratia Christi* 1.1–2 (PL 44.359–31).

⁶⁵ Jerome, *Ep.* 143.2 (CSEL 56.293).

⁶⁶ See Jones et al., eds., *PLRE* 1.732–33 (Proba); 468 (Juliana); Martindale, ed. *PLRE* 2.351–52 (Demetrias). See especially Jerome's *Ep.* 130.

treatise on prayer for her. Augustine complies in letter 130, which begins with a pointed discussion of how the rich can be 'saved, although the difficulties of it are attested by Jesus' words about camels passing through eyes of needles. Augustine next warns Proba about the practical vexations that riches bring to their owners. How much better it is to be free from their burden! He reminds her that holy men in the past took the "precaution" of donating their wealth to the poor. However, if Proba cannot do this because she still has family obligations, Augustine concedes that she herself knows what account she can give to God of her use of riches—a sentiment that could have been either comforting or unsettling to his aristocratic addressee.⁶⁷ Only after this lengthy preface regarding the dangers that wealth poses does Augustine get down to his ostensible topic, prayer.

Proba, it appears, was not herself lacking in philosophical reflectiveness. She replied to Augustine that the human soul, while it abides in the body, is all too easily pulled down to earthly affairs. Augustine responds with advice on how we should bear both the pleasures and the evils of life with equanimity, and concludes by thanking Proba for her "most pious care for my welfare."⁶⁸ So far, so good, between Augustine and the Anician women.

In 413, with Demetrias's vow of virginity, Augustine has yet another opportunity to praise the nobility and the religious conviction of this trio. His letter 150, expressing joy at the event, rises to an unusual peak of flowery rhetoric, nearly rivalling Jerome's shameless flattery of Demetrias on the same occasion.⁶⁹ We gather from a later letter to Juliana that Augustine had visited the Anician household shortly before Demetrias's vow; he suggests that his exhortation to her may have been a decisive factor in her ascetic renunciation.⁷⁰

Another literary offering of Augustine to the Anician women was his treatise *On the Good of Widowhood*. Written probably in 414 for the widowed Juliana, the treatise explains how polygamy and remarriage were appropriate and in accord with God's plan for men of the "Old Covenant," but not for Christians. Augustine praises Juliana's resolve to embrace Christian widowhood, but expresses the Church's preference for lifelong virginity, a course on which Juliana's daughter Demetrias had embarked. Perhaps Demetrias's virginity can compensate for her mother's loss of it, Augustine suggests. Indeed, he remarks, Demetrias already has a copy of his book *On Holy Virginity*, composed thirteen years earlier as a companion piece to *On the Good of Marriage*.⁷¹

By 414, however, the problem that was to cloud forever Augustine's

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Ep.* 130.1.2; 130.2.3; 130.3.8 (CSEL 44.41–42, 42–43, 49).

⁶⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 131 (CSEL 44.77–79).

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Ep.* 150; cf. Jerome *Ep.* 130.

⁷⁰ Augustine, *Ep.* 188.1.1 (CSEL 57.119–20).

⁷¹ Augustine, *De bono viduitatis* 7.10; 8.11; 23.29 (CSEL 41.314–15, 315–17, 342). Cf. Augustine, *Retractiones* 2.23 (49) (CCL 57.109).

further relations with the Anician women appears in his correspondence with them: Pelagius. In Augustine's treatise for Juliana on widowhood, Pelagius is not referred to by name, but the addressee is warned against men whose discourses against grace are labelled "insidious," who lead Christians to imagine that prayer is superfluous. Echoing his famous line in *Confessions* book 10 that allegedly gave Pelagius pause years earlier,⁷² Augustine writes to Juliana that "we should rather beg God to give us what he commands us to have," and applies these words to the chastity practiced in respective ways by both the married and the celibate.⁷³

The last letter of Augustine to the Anician women (Epistle 188, composed in 415) shows him distressed at Pelagius's relationship with the family. Writing to Juliana, Augustine turns immediately from Demetrias's virginal vow to his earlier warning to Juliana not to heed men whose opinions are opposed to the grace of God. In the interim, Juliana had apparently assured Augustine that he need have no hesitations about *her* family's religious correctness: We have always been completely orthodox and have never suffered even a hint of heresy, "not even small errors," she had asserted. Her confident reply served only to alarm Augustine more, since he had by then learned that Pelagius had sent Demetrias a book that emphasized human self-sufficiency rather than God's grace, at least as Augustine understood the meaning of grace. In his letter to Juliana, Augustine equivocates on whether he does or does not know the author of the work: He begins by asking Juliana if *they* know the author, but concludes by affirming that it is Pelagius.⁷⁴ He quotes a passage from Pelagius's treatise to Demetrias in which the young virgin is encouraged to believe that her spiritual riches were her own achievement. Worse yet, Augustine had discovered that it was the mother of the virgin (that is, Juliana herself) who had requested its author to compose this treatise for her daughter. Augustine argues that Demetrias, in all events, must be dissuaded from the views that the book's author professes.⁷⁵ Augustine's own letter to Juliana, by contrast, becomes a minitreatise on grace.

Augustine's letter of 416 to Juliana is the last recorded correspondence between him and the Anician women. Any expectation that their friendship might continue through the years had, apparently, been doomed by their support for Augustine's theological enemy. Despite his powerful theological mind, Augustine had not been able to win aristocratic women to a firm support of orthodoxy, as he defined it. His lack of success compares unfavorably to Jerome's triumphant enlistment of *his* women friends in the anti-Origenist campaign, and to Chrysostom's ability to attract wealthy women

⁷² Augustine, *Confessiones* 10.37.60 (CCL 27.188; the evidence for Pelagius's discomfiture is given in Augustine *De dono perseverantiae* 20.53 (PL 45.1026).

⁷³ Augustine, *De bono viduitatis* 17.21 (CSEL 41.329).

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Ep.* 188.1.3, 2.4, 3.14 (CSEL 57.121, 122, 130).

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Ep.* 188.2.4 (Augustine cites Pelagius's *Ad Demetriadem* 11 [PL 33.1107]), 3.14, 3.9 (CSEL 57.122, 130, 127).

(not only Italica, but also two of the Anician women, Proba and Juliana) to support his cause in Rome.⁷⁶

If this is the unhappy end of Augustine's relations with celibate women aristocrats, his advice to the married suggests that he upheld traditional views of wifely submission—views somewhat at odds with the theory of “companionship” in marriage he expressed elsewhere. The contrast between Augustine's abstract theory and his practical advice is strikingly evident in several of his letters.

Consider, for example, the letter Augustine wrote in 411 to a married couple, Armentarius and Paulina, who had taken a vow of Christian continence, but were hard-pressed to keep it. The letter's theme and motifs are economic: Pay what you owe to the Great Creditor in the heavens, who though kindly is also firm. There could be, Augustine asserts, only one reason for the couple *not* to honor their debt to God: if Paulina, the wife, were too weak in mind to carry out their high resolve. But since Augustine has heard that she is ready to uphold the agreement, he urges them to carry out the plan. Here, however, Augustine switches his argument, a switch that allows the attentive reader to understand what actually had transpired: All that prevents Paulina from carrying out their vow is her obligation to pay Armentarius the “marital debt.” That is, although Augustine had raised as a theoretical issue the *woman's* possible inability to live apart from sexual relations—thus playing to the rhetoric of “woman as the weaker sex”—it is in actuality her wifely duty to provide sexual services to her husband that stands in the way of their ascetic resolve. Augustine here cites the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:4 on husband and wife having power over each other's bodies. In its original context, this verse constituted a sobering innovation in sexual morality for *male* converts, namely, that they must be monogamously faithful. By contrast, Augustine cites the verse to emphasize the “bond” of bodily obligation to which Christian *women* commit themselves in marriage. His argument is reminiscent of his earlier praise, in the *Confessions*, for his mother's meek acceptance of her marital bondage and her counsel to female friends that they should patiently accept the abuse accorded them by their husbands, since the marriage contract had put them in a state of submission.⁷⁷

The theme of wifely submission is carried to a dramatic conclusion in Augustine's undated epistle 262 to Ecdicia. Ecdicia and her husband had made a vow of continence that the husband had been unable to keep. Augustine blames Ecdicia for rushing her husband into a promise he was not ready to make and for her apparent unwillingness to resume sexual relations when he found himself unable to keep continent. The husband had fallen

⁷⁶ John Chrysostom, *Epp.* 168–69 (PG 52.709), dated probably to 406 A.D.

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Ep.* 127.1, 6, 9 (CSEL 44.19–20, 25–26, 28–29); cf. *Confessiones* 9.9.9 (CCL 27.145).

into adultery for which Augustine blames Ecdicia. As a wife, she should have been subject to her husband in everything, especially, says Augustine, since they were both Christians: For Augustine, Christian commitment apparently implies a greater, not a lesser, degree of wifely submission. Augustine reminds Ecdicia that if *she* were the “weak” partner who needed sexual intercourse, her husband would have been obliged to give it—and how much more fitting it would have been for *her* to acquiesce to his needs, she “to whom subjection was more appropriate.” After all, it was her husband who gave her “permission” to practice continence in the first place.⁷⁸

Not only had Ecdicia erred in this sexual matter, she had taken Christian renunciation too seriously in other ways as well. Without asking her husband’s permission, she had given away her clothes, gold, silver, and money to “two unknown wandering monks.” Once again, Ecdicia had failed to wait for her husband’s agreement. Augustine reminds her that the married woman has no right to dispose of her own property; she belongs to her “head,” as the New Testament tells us. Her husband was correct to insist that Christian couples may retain their possessions if they have a child who may require future support.⁷⁹

Last, Ecdicia had further outraged her husband by refusing to wear appropriate clothes for a matron; she had adopted a shabby widow’s garb. Augustine argues that even if Ecdicia’s husband had forced her to bedeck herself with excessive ornaments (which he had not), she should have consented to his request, wearing her “humble heart” underneath the “proud attire.” Queen Esther is held up to Ecdicia as an example of a woman who knew how to influence a husband in religious directions by her appearance and by submissiveness.⁸⁰

Augustine concludes his letter to Ecdicia by instructing her to write an apology to her angry husband, begging his forgiveness for the sin of giving away her property, and promising obedience to him in the future if he will once again practice continence.⁸¹ Nowhere else in Augustine’s correspondence are his views on the marriages of actual Christians revealed so nakedly—and so much in contrast to his depiction in book 14 of the *City of God* of that harmonious and loving companionship that would have constituted the marriage of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.⁸² Augustine’s theology of the Fall apparently reinforced his opinion that women, now in a state of subjection, could not expect the companionship of Eden to prevail in this sin-ridden world. His views of the ideal male-female relationship possible in Eden provide a dramatic contrast to his approach to actual married women, whom he holds responsible for their husband’s failures to keep

⁷⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 262.1, 2, 3 (CSEL 57.621, 622–23, 623–24).

⁷⁹ Augustine, *Ep.* 262.4, 5, 7, 8 (CSEL 57.624–25, 626–27).

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Ep.* 262.9, 10 (CSEL 57.628–29).

⁸¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 262.11 (CSEL 57.630–31).

⁸² Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.26 (CCL 48.449–50).

ascetic vows. His understanding of real-life marriage seems virtually unaffected by his theological vision of companionate relationship.

For all three men, the lack of correspondence between their theology of women and their actual associations with women prompts reflection on theology's failure to penetrate the socioeconomic order. As modern feminists, we may be glad that Jerome's and Chrysostom's misogynist theologies left untouched their relationships with female aristocrats, whereas in the case of Augustine, we might rather wish that his vision of the ideal male-female relationship had more fully informed his actual dealings with women. One point, however, these theologians share in common: Far from attempting to change the *experience* of marriage for Christian women, all three dwell on the restrictions, humiliations, and trials that are the matron's lot, whether these are expressed "in theory" (by Jerome and Chrysostom) or are acknowledged "in practice" (by Augustine). That Augustine for his own reasons chose to modify the harsh rhetoric of his predecessors does not mean that he, any more than they, challenged male dominance and female submission within actual marriage. The final "moral" of this account is that, yet again, we must register the slowness of Christianity to challenge the traditional structure of marriage.

Abbreviations

CCL	= Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	= Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
Ep., Epp.	= Epistle, Epistles
Hom.	= Homily
PG	= Patrologia Graeca
PL	= Patrologia Latina
PLRE	= <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
SC	= Sources Chr�tiennes



Harvard Divinity School

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SEX AND SALVATION IN TERTULLIAN

F. FORRESTER CHURCH

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

Though often remembered for something he never said,¹ Tertullian did contribute a few bold lines to his own caricature. Take for instance the famous, "*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*"² It has come to symbolize Tertullian's wholesale rejection of philosophy.³ In fact, his indebtedness to the matter and methods of his classical heritage is profound.⁴ Today, by the same token, his ability to coin a striking phrase is earning for Tertullian yet another reputation he does not deserve. In the first book of *De cultu feminarum*, a withering attack on female fashions, Tertullian invokes the curse of Eve by means of a cruel and impressive metaphor: "*Tu es diaboli ianua*," he writes; "You are the devil's gateway."⁵ At once provocative of timely indignation and attractive as a foil, this single utterance is alone responsible for perhaps as much popular notoriety as Tertullian has ever been afforded.⁶ The following is offered in the hope that a more extensive examination of his attitude toward women may

¹"*Credo quia absurdum*." Timothy Barnes notes, "the passage is frequently invoked to prove his irrationality, or that he viewed religion as the realm of subjective and unreasoning emotion. If that was his true attitude, why did he ever descend to apparently rational argument?" (*Tertullian: a Historical and Literary Study* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1971] 223).

²*De praescriptione haereticorum* 7. 9 (*Tertulliani opera*, CCLI, II [Turnhout: 1954]).

³E.g., Charles Cochrane's chapter "Quid Athenae Hierosolymis? The Impasse of Constantinianism," in *Christianity and Classical Culture* (1940; reprint, Oxford: University Press, 1972) 213ff.

⁴Recent scholarship has overthrown the previous notion entirely; see in particular: Stephen Otto, *Natura und Dispositio: Untersuchung zum Naturbegriff und zur Denkform Tertullians* (München: Hueber, 1960); Richard Klein, *Tertullian und das römische Reich* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1968); Robert Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1972); Justo L. González, "Athens and Jerusalem Revisited: Reason and Authority in Tertullian," *Church History*, 43 (1974) 17-25; and, Barnes, *Tertullian*, who provides perhaps the finest and certainly the most provocative single study of Tertullian available.

⁵*De cultu feminarum* I. 1. 2.

⁶To give but a sampling of those recent publications in which this text is so utilized: Nancy van Vuuren, *The Subversion of Women as Practiced by*

serve both to correct such misconceptions as have been drawn from the famous "gateway passage," and also to clarify some of the ambiguities inherent in the *Frauenfragen* for early Christians.

While no single study has been devoted to Tertullian's "misogyny," his attitude toward women is generally characterized as such.⁷ Paul Monceaux, the great scholar of African Christianity, has made the case as forcibly as any: "These minute precautions and railleries betray a singular defiance with regard to woman. Tertullian is the first of the great Christian misogynists. In advance of the medieval theologians, he considers woman as the principal obstacle of salvation. He precludes her from any active role in the Church, and seeks to restrict her to the home. He sharply summons her to modesty, to a consciousness of her weakness and of her eternal misery, which renders her forever responsible for the unhappiness of humanity."⁸ When isolated from his other writings on the subject, the *locus classicus* of Tertullian's misogyny does seem to bear these observations out. Due to its importance, I quote it in full.

If faith on earth were as great as the reward expected in heaven, my well beloved sisters, not one of you from the moment when you came to know the living God and recognized your own state, that is, the condition of all women, would have desired too gay, not to say too ostentatious, an apparel. Rather, you would have gone about in humble dress, even preferring to affect squalor, that you might, by donning every sort of penitential garb and acting the part of mourning and repentant Eve, expiate more fully that which woman derives from Eve, the ignominy, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium of human perdition. "In sorrow and anxiety you will bring forth, O woman, and you shall incline toward your husband, and he will be your master." Are you not aware that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on in our own time; the guilt must then, of necessity, live on also. You are the devil's gateway. You first plucked the forbidden fruit and first deserted the

Churches, Witch-hunters, and Other Sexists (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973) 29; Vern L. Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex: a History of Attitudes toward Women* (1973; reprint, Boston: Beacon, 1974) 114; Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (1973; reprint, Boston: Beacon, 1974) 44; Rosemary Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) 157.

⁷Even George Tavard, whose book *Woman in Christian Tradition* ([Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973] 59) offers perhaps the most balanced treatment of the subject available, goes no further than to admit that "Tertullian is no ordinary misogynist."

⁸*Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne I: Tertullien et les origines* (1901; reprint, Brussels: Culture et civilisation, 1963) 387.

divine law. You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not brave enough to attack. It was you who so readily destroyed the image of God, man. By virtue of your just desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die. And you still think of putting adornments over the animal skins that cover you!⁹

Even allowing for considerable hyperbole, Tertullian's indictment strikes one as exceptionally vicious. Most disconcerting of all is the damning implication that woman was, is, and shall continue to be, little more than a millstone around man's neck. Again to cite Monceaux: "Woman is the devil's ally on earth against man; her weaknesses, her seductions, and her coquetties are nothing but stratagems of hell. She cannot hope for her forgiveness and her salvation except on the condition of renouncing the graces of her sex. And man, if he wishes to please God, must separate himself as much as possible from woman."¹⁰

Placing the "gateway passage" in perspective should help to answer such criticism as has been generalized from it. To this end, Tertullian's conception of woman must be clarified. Did he consistently blame woman for the fall? Is her natural status held to be inferior to that of man? Does Tertullian apply an ethical double standard when instructing women and men in matters of discipline? Are women really represented in his writings as "the weaker sex?" Since each of these questions touches on the problem of sex as it affects salvation, they will be considered with an eye to Tertullian's various schemes of redemption. Beginning with the fall, I shall proceed by examining, with regard to their respective efficacy for women and men, three means of exculpation available to Christians: sanctification by water, by moral discipline, and by blood. A brief section on the kingdom, with special note taken of the resurrected body, will bring this study to a close.

I. *Diaboli ianua*: the Devil's Gateway

The section on Tertullian in a recent treatment of the doctrine of original sin opens with the following pertinent caveat: "When one attempts to reconstruct his ideas about the primitive state of man, Adam's sin and its consequences, one must guard against isolating certain texts, no doubt important, but lost in the mass of works in which the object is quite otherwise."¹¹ Though our text is

⁹*Cult.* I. 1. 1-2.

¹⁰Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 388.

¹¹H. Rondet, "Le péché originel dans la tradition," *Bulletin de littérature*

not singled out for mention, it might well have been. The "gateway passage" is the only place in all Tertullian where the exclusive culpability of Eve is spelled out.¹² To account for this singular discrepancy, we may consider for a moment a second anomalous passage, in which the fall is attributed to gluttony.

Adam had received from God the law that he not taste of the tree of recognition of good and evil, with death to follow should he taste of it. But even he, reverting to the condition of a psychic, . . . and no longer being capable of the things which were the spirit's, yielded more readily to his belly than to God. Heeding the pabulum rather than the precept, he sold salvation for his gullet.¹³

Here, the issue at hand is fasting. Tertullian invests it with great significance by blaming the fall on unbridled appetite. In *De cultu* he employs a like device to persuade women to dress modestly. To establish the salvific importance of his subject, he hearkens back to Eve. Her complicity in the fall is then utilized to produce upon his listeners the desired effect, which he provokes by means of a pointed and highly rhetorical *ad feminam* argument. While details of his invective cannot be attributed entirely to rhetorical invention, one must always keep in mind that in Tertullian a given problem, such as the fall, may be adapted freely to the requirements both of subject and of audience.¹⁴

The extent to which this is the case in *De cultu* can be shown by a brief review of several other passages where Tertullian's notion of the fall is revealed. In an elemental form it appears in the second chapter of *Adversus Iudaeos*. Adam and Eve, ordered to abstain from a given tree's fruit or die, break the primordial law by yielding to the persuasion of the serpent. In this interpretation both are made partners with the devil. Adam is his ally no less than Eve. In *De patientia*, where the entire undoing is ascribed to

ecclesiastique, 67 (1966) 115.

¹²Citing this fact with reference to the same article by Rondet, Marie Turcan, in her edition of *De cultu* (*Tertullien: La toilette de femmes*, Sources chrétiennes, No. 173 [Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1971] 37, n. 3) notes that in every other instance, "C'est toujours Adam qui est sur la sellette."

¹³*De jejuniis* 3. 2.

¹⁴The "gateway passage" and its immediate context, constituting the *exordium* of *De cultu* I, are replete with *ethos* and *pathos*, which were the favored means of proof for an introduction. Sider (*Ancient Rhetoric*, 21) describes the *exordium* as an attempt "to set the audience in a receptive mood by an immediate appeal to considerations of an ethical and emotional character." His important study contributes substantially to our appreciation of the influence of rhetoric on Tertullian's theological methodology.

impatience on the part of the principals, their mutual complicity is further underscored. While Eve's sin is acknowledged to be prior to that of Adam, the two share a common frailty for having sinned in the same manner. Even the devil, in whom Tertullian had perceived "the nativity of impatience," is guilty of the weakness he inspired.¹⁵ In *Adversus Marcionem*, Tertullian acknowledges Eve in the context of Adam's not concealing from God "her who had done the beguiling,"¹⁶ but in the final analysis he dismisses implicitly the importance of any mediating role she may have played. "It was the man who brought upon himself the indignity of death, . . . for even if it was an angel that beguiled him, he who was beguiled was a free man and master of himself."¹⁷ The same note is struck in *De exhortatione castitatis*: "Adam, the founder of our race and first to sin, willed the sin which he committed, for the devil did not impose the will to sin upon him, but simply subministered material to that will."¹⁸ In the words of Rondet, "Adam is, therefore, very much at fault. Having been advised that on the day he would eat of the fruits of the tree of knowledge he would die, he transgressed the divine law. Therefore, he is clearly the one responsible for the entry of death into the world."¹⁹

That Eve's participation in the fall was of minor moment to Tertullian can be confirmed by evidence drawn from his two principal programs for salvation. While in each of these Eve figures only incidentally, either Adam or the devil plays a central part. In the one, Adam's responsibility for the fall is crucial to the subsequent process of redemption; in the other, the corruptive influence of the devil anticipates and predicates the Christian's struggle with the powers of evil in the world. The former, built around Christ's atonement, is heavily dependent upon Tertullian's notion of traducianism. Inherited sin, passed on through the process of generation, stems directly from Adam. When he was given over to death on account of his sin, "the whole human race, infected with his seed, were made the carrier of his condemnation."²⁰ This process is reversed by the action of Christ as conferred upon the individual Christian through baptism in the

¹⁵ *Pat.* 5. 5.

¹⁶ *Marc.* II. 2. 7.

¹⁷ *Marc.* II. 8. 2.

¹⁸ *Exhort. cast.* 2. 5.

¹⁹ "Le péché originel," 118.

²⁰ *De testimonio animae* 3. 2.

Holy Spirit. Accordingly, "every soul is therefore reckoned in Adam until it is reckoned anew in Christ."²¹ In a different vein entirely, the latter program provides for sanctity to be earned and maintained by personal discipline. Here, for Tertullian, one's struggle is with the devil, "the author of error, the corrupter of the whole world."²² Citing Adam's disobedience, he warns:

In like manner you too, if you should disobey the Lord who has instructed you by placing before you the precept of free action, will, through the freedom of your will, slip into willing that which God does not permit. . . . Thus, the devil's only task is to try to make you will that which it rests with you to will. But when you have, it follows that he subjects you to himself.²³

Here too, although other disconcerting conclusions might be drawn from the fact, Eve is peripheral to Tertullian's conception of the fall. According to him, the devil is to blame for the woes of humankind, and Adam is responsible.

II. *Ignoscentiae ianua*: the Gateway of Forgiveness

Baptism. Simone de Beauvoir was perhaps the first in this century to give the "gateway passage" wide public notice. In her influential work, *The Second Sex*, it is twice alluded to; once, in a manner reminiscent of Gibbon, to juxtapose Christianity with barbarism, and later to demonstrate the practical application of dualism in early Christian thought. On this second occasion she introduces the passage in the following manner: "Evil is an absolute reality; and the flesh is sin. And of course, since woman remains always the Other, it is not held that reciprocally male and female are both flesh: the flesh that for the Christian is the hostile Other is precisely woman."²⁴ This interpretation raises two questions regarding Tertullian's anthropology. First, has he really this low an estimation of the flesh; and, are women actually relegated by Tertullian to a natural status inferior to that of men?

Simply to place these questions in the context of redemption and salvation is to answer them. Adam's sin, issuing in the mortality of the flesh and passed on by fleshly means in

²¹*De anima* 40. 1. In contrast, the Eve/Mary motif is utilized but slightly by Tertullian. In *De carne Christi* 17, where it finds its fullest expression, the argument appears to be derivative (compare Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 100; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* III. 22. 4).

²²*Test. an.* 3. 2.

²³*Exhort. cast.* 2. 6-7.

²⁴Tr. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953) 167.

procreation, established the flesh to be sinful. The reversal of this process demands that this same flesh be cleansed of sin that it may again be found suitable for eternal life. Tertullian writes that “for humankind to be saved it was necessary for Christ to come forth in the very state that humankind had entered upon its condemnation.”²⁵ By this model, and in the words of Tertullian, “the flesh, in fact, is the hinge of salvation.”²⁶ In *De resurrectione*, he elaborates on this:

Since the soul, in consequence of its salvation, is chosen to the service of God, it is the flesh which actually renders it capable of such service. The flesh indeed, is washed, in order that the soul may be cleansed; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed with the cross, that the soul too may be fortified; the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands, that the soul also may be illuminated by the Spirit; the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ that the soul likewise may fatten on its God. They cannot then be separated in their recompense, when they are united in their service.²⁷

There is no dualism here of flesh and soul, much less of fleshly women and high-minded men, but rather a sharp differentiation between those who remain in Adam and all who have come to live in Christ. “Whatever flesh lives in Christ . . . is already a different substance, emerging in a new state, no longer generated of the filth of the seed, nor of the ordure of concupiscence, but of the pure water and a clean spirit.”²⁸

Even this weight of evidence may not satisfy those who would place the burden of proof on a single text or two that seem to imply the opposite. It will be recalled that Tertullian in *De cultu* I.2. claims of woman, “it was you who so readily destroyed the image of God, man.” The inference to be made is that she is considered something less than the image of God, which grounds Tertullian’s bias in the supposed spiritual deficiency of womankind. By way of corroboration a second passage can be adduced which concerns the veiling of virgins. It is Tertullian’s contention that female virgins should not be made any more conspicuous than male. As the latter are distinguished by no sign, the former must also conform to the standard of their sex and be veiled. In an *a fortiori* argument, he asks how God, if he truly had intended for women to be so privileged, would have failed also to

²⁵ *De carne* 17. 6.

²⁶ *De resurrectione mortuorum* 8. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 8. 2-3.

²⁸ *De pudicitia* 6. 16.

make such a concession to men, "either on account of their higher claim to intimacy, for having been created in his image, or due to the more strenuous nature of their work."²⁹ Michel Spanneut for one, in his recent book, *Tertullien et les premiers moralistes africains*, cites this text as proof of Tertullian's disregard for women. "He seems clearly to say, even more plainly in *De virginibus velandis*, that man alone is the glory and image of God, and that woman destroyed this image. Consequently, she must be veiled and dressed very modestly, and she cannot have the same familiarity with God that man can."³⁰ While forced to admit that "this restriction does not prevent Tertullian elsewhere from calling upon woman to respect the image of God within her," Spanneut makes no attempt to reconcile this fact with the passage at hand.³¹

Allowing for the sake of argument that Tertullian did believe man alone to have been formed in the image of God, how does this affect my contention that Tertullian held baptism in the Spirit to be efficacious for both women and men? First of all, the "image" (*imago*) and "likeness" (*similitudo*) of God must be differentiated. The former is an external resemblance to God, the latter, an internalization of God's very Spirit. In the act of creation the flesh was formed by the divine creator, "in the image of God, which he animated from his own breath into the likeness of his own vital vigor."³² In yielding to the spirit of evil, humankind was deprived of its likeness to God; God's image, being formal in character, was retained despite the fall from grace. With the action of Christ came forgiveness of sins and redemption through the agency of the Holy Spirit. By accepting Christ, one was restored "to God's likeness, who formerly existed in his image (the 'image' reckoned in form; the 'likeness' for eternity) for he again receives that Spirit of God which he once had received from his breath, but later had lost through sin."³³

²⁹*De virginibus velandis* 10. 4. See Christoph Stücklin's edition (Frankfurt / M.: Herbert Lang Bern, 1974), in which is contained a considerable essay on "Die Stellung der Frau in der Gemeinde nach der Schleierschrift." Stücklin makes more of the first two chapters of Genesis than Tertullian does, writing (p. 187) that "Schöpfungs- und Sündenfallgeschichte haben in seinen Augen das Verhältnis der Frau zum Manne und ebenso ihre Stellung vor Gott irreversibel determiniert."

³⁰(Gembloux: Editions J. Duculot; Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1969) 45.

³¹*Ibid.*, n. 2.

³²*Res. mort.* 9. 1.

³³*De baptismo* 5. 7.

Now, even if Tertullian actually believed that woman was not formed in the "image" of God, this is demonstrably not the case with respect to God's "likeness." Although holding that her flesh was long without specific form, Tertullian argues that "even so, she was a living soul, since in my opinion she was then a part of Adam's soul. Besides, God's breath would have animated her too, if woman had not received, along with his flesh, a transmission of his soul."³⁴

It seems certain that Tertullian, having acknowledged the eternal "likeness" to God in woman, would not need begrudge her the formal "image." If he actually does, it is either as a function of rhetorical expedience, or as required by literal exegesis of the scriptures. Either way, extensive reading in Tertullian bears out in principle Henry Chadwick's observation that while "Christianity did not give political emancipation to either women or slaves, . . . it did much to elevate their domestic status by its doctrine that all . . . are created in God's image and all alike redeemed in Christ."³⁵

Modesty and Chastity. Rather than faith, hope, and charity, in Tertullian the principal Christian virtues are modesty, chastity, and sanctity. The third and greatest of these was bestowed by the Holy Spirit through the redemptive act of baptism as a consequence of God's forgiveness. However, once the sin inherited from Adam had been absolved in the baptismal ablution, the gateway of forgiveness (*ignoscentiae ianua*) was closed and bolted fast.³⁶ The Christian was now responsible for all his or her actions just as Adam had been before the fall. With little recourse offered should one sin after baptism, the sanctity sealed by it had to be maintained intact for salvation to be assured. This required strict discipline, which for Tertullian consisted principally in the exercise of modesty and chastity, or continence. Thus, it is on theological grounds that Tertullian presents his case

³⁴*De anima* 36. 4.

³⁵*The Early Church* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967) 59.

³⁶*De Paenitentia* 7. 10. To Tertullian, an opening for repentance seemed little more than an invitation to sin. A single second repentance, which had at first been sanctioned by him (*Paen.* 7. 10), was later admitted only in the case of lesser offenses (*Pud.* 1. 10). Two ramifications of this are first, the disapprobation of pedobaptism — one should postpone baptism until one's faith is sound and one's lustfulness contained, as by marriage, or abated, as by continence (*Bapt.* 18); second, the insistence upon moral purity — one must refrain from sin in order not to fall from grace.

(*pro pudicitia, pro castitate, pro sanctitate*) for moral purity.³⁷

Opening book two of *De cultu feminarum*, Tertullian strikes a note of promise and compassion very different from that searing admonition of woman with which the first began.

Handmaids of the living God, my fellow-servants and sisters, by the right which I, the least consequential of persons, enjoy with you, by the right of fellow-servantship and brotherhood, I make bold to address to you a discourse, not out of affectation but rather in affection, for the cause of your salvation. That salvation, not only of women, but also of men, consists primarily in the exhibition of modesty.³⁸

In stressing the importance of modesty, Tertullian is urging his listeners to look to their own best interest. He asks them to consider "whether you will rise with your powder and rouge and perfume, and with your fancy hairdos; whether it will be women thus made up whom the angels will carry into the clouds to meet Christ."³⁹ In addition, he makes a point to generalize his remarks:

³⁷*Pud.* 17. 1.

³⁸*Cult.* II. 1. The difference of tone between the two proems has led some scholars, most recently Timothy Barnes (*Tertullian*, 137), to conclude that the two books must be independent works, written as many as ten years apart, during which time Tertullian's antipathy for women markedly increased. His chronology is adapted from G. Säfllund, *De Pallio und die stilistische Entwicklung Tertullians* (Lund: 1955) 106ff., with Barnes dating II in 197, and I in c. 205/6. Marie Turcan, in her new edition of *De cultu* (p. 20ff), disagrees, as does René Braun in "Le problème des deux livres du *De cultu feminarum*," *Studia patristica* VII (Berlin: Akademie, 1966) 133-42. The single most convincing factor in their arguments is that Tertullian gives a summary of his subject in I. 4. 1-2, making a division of the "*habitus feminae*" into two parts roughly corresponding to matters discussed in I and II respectively. "*Habitus feminae duplicem speciem circumfert, cultum et ornatum. Cultum dicimus quem mundum muliebre vocant, ornatum quem immundum muliebre convenit dici. Ille in auro et argento et gemmis et vestibus deputatur, iste in cura capilli et cutis et earum partium corporis quae oculos trahunt.*" While it is dangerous to argue, as does Turcan, that the plan is entirely consistent with its execution, it is clear that the first book will not stand alone, given the statement of intention in I. 4. Braun, while defending his earlier opinion that the two books belong together (*Deus Christianorum* [Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962] 571), suggests that what we have represents an expansion of a sermon (originally II) into a tractate (I and II). This serves to explain those aspects of I that indicated to Säfllund that it was prior, especially the elaboration in I of certain points only touched on in II (e.g., II. 10 as presupposed in I. 2 and 7). A third possibility would be that Tertullian consolidated two addresses into a single tractate. Regardless, there is no reason to assume that the two are distanced from one another by a decade in order to rationalize any implicit differences between them.

³⁹*Cult.* II. 7. 3; compare *Cult.* I. 2. 5, where it is claimed that all artificial

they pertain to men as well. Men have “deceptive trickeries of form peculiar to their own sex,” such as enhancing the shape of the beard by severe trimming, selective plucking, and shaving around the mouth.⁴⁰ Tertullian has to remind his brothers that “since the knowledge of God has put to an end every desire to please by means of voluptuous attraction, all these things are rejected as frivolous, as hostile to modesty.”⁴¹ On the other hand, he warns women that “attractiveness is not to be censured, as being a bodily happiness, . . . but is to be feared, on account of the effrontery and violence of suitors.”⁴² In *De pudicitia*, a treatise devoted to the claims of modesty (depicted therein as the “*flos morum, honor corporum, decor sexuum, . . . fundamentum sanctitatis*”⁴³), this same concern is expressed. There Tertullian writes that “it makes no difference whether a man assault another’s bride or widow, provided she be other than his own wife, just as it makes no difference where, whether it be in chambers or towers that modesty is massacred.”⁴⁴

Along with modesty, chastity too is cited for its services as a handmaiden to sanctity. Through chaste living, “we, God’s image, become also his likeness, that we can be holy just as he himself is holy.”⁴⁵ While such a statement seems, on the face of it,

adornments originated with the devil, and consequently must be shunned by self-respecting Christians, who aspire to salvation. Noting *De cultu* in particular, Sider (*Ancient Rhetoric*, 120) remarks, “how pliant the topics of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric were in his hands . . . At every point, he casts aspersion upon, he vituperates, the various parts of dress on the grounds of their origin and utility. By thus bringing together two themes appropriate each to a different genre, he has been able to write an exhibition piece that carries at the same time an honest hortatory purpose.”

⁴⁰*Cult.* II. 8. 2. Moreover, it is the same motive, *ambitio*, that impels both men and women to dress fashionably. “Vanity” drives men to exchange the mantle for the toga (*De pallio* 4. 10), as much as it does women to bedeck themselves with jewels (*Cult.* I. 2. 4).

⁴¹*Cult.* II. 8. 2. In *De spectaculis* (25. 2) Tertullian notes that among the devil’s things there will be met with no greater stumbling-block than “*ille ipse mulierum et uirorum accuratior cultus*.”

⁴²*Cult.* II. 2. 6.

⁴³*Pud.* I. 1.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* 4. 3.

⁴⁵*Exhort. cast.* 1. 3. This kind of emulative sanctification, part and parcel of a works-righteousness, has, as is evident from the language, many constitutive elements in common with Tertullian’s theory of atonement. It might be said to represent a post-baptismal extension of the means by which humankind was made pure, as adapted to the requirements that attend to the maintenance of that same purity. While Christ plays an exemplary role in this second scheme, humankind is left, for all intents and purposes, to atone for itself.

straightforward enough, Tertullian's advocacy of continence has been characterized as not only "a repudiation of sex, but also of women."⁴⁶ A simple comparison of *Ad Uxorem I*, in which Tertullian advises his wife against remarrying if she should happen to outlive him, and *De exhortatione castitatis*, addressed to a recently widowed friend and instructing him in the same manner, demonstrates that the latter assumption simply is not so. Even Monceaux admits that Tertullian's advice to widows applies equally to widowers.⁴⁷ This is emphasized in a third and later tract against remarriage, where Tertullian is careful lest it be inferred that he is speaking only to one sex, in this case women: "we address both sexes, even if we mention here but one, since a single discipline applies to both."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Katharine M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: a History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966) 14. Generalized, the argument reads as follows: "What the early Christians did was to strike the male out of the definition of man, and human being out of the definition of woman. Man was a human being made for the highest and noblest purposes; woman was a female made only to serve one. She was on the earth to inflame the heart of man with every evil passion." James Donaldson, *Woman: her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and among the early Christians* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907) 182, cited by Chapman Cohen, *Woman and Christianity: the Subjection and Exploitation of a Sex* (London: Pioneer Press, 1919) 46.

⁴⁷*Histoire littéraire*, 391. Henry Chadwick (*The Early Church*, 59) writes, "The Christian sex ethic differed from the conventional standards of pagan society in that it regarded unchastity in a husband as no less serious a breach of loyalty and untrust than unfaithfulness in a wife. The apostle's doctrine that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. iii, 28) was not taken to mean a programme of political emancipation, which in antiquity would have been unthinkable. The social role of women remained that of the homemaker and wife. At the same time, Christianity cut across ordinary social patterns more deeply than any other religion, and encouraged the notion of the responsibility of individual moral choice in a way that was quite exceptional."

⁴⁸*De monogamia* 10. 7. Monceaux (*Histoire littéraire*, 191) suggests that Tertullian's interest in his wife's future continence is occasioned by proleptic jealousy, noting that, "il proteste aussitôt qu'il ne lui donne pas ce conseil par une sorte de jalousie anticipée, mais il proteste de telle sorte, et avec tant d'insistance, qu'il trahit justement son involontaire préoccupation." However, in the three tracts treating of the question, only in the one addressed to his wife is allowance made for the contingency that she may, regardless of his wishes, decide to remarry. If she should, he requires only that she remarry within the faith. This is just an intimation of the dangers to be incurred by the first who is trepidatious enough to attempt a psycho-historical study of Tertullian. Timothy Barnes (*Tertullian*, 136) states the problem nicely and makes a few sound conjectures, noting that "some explanation must be attempted for his repeated discussion of women and marriage." It is hoped that this article will contribute a

It is also claimed, by Michel Spanneut among others, that "what Tertullian says about chastity lets it be understood that he does not have a high opinion of marriage."⁴⁹ Spanneut cites Tertullian's antipathy to women as responsible for this. However, the basis for his original assumption is undermined by one remarkable piece of evidence, the closing chapter of Tertullian's *Ad uxorem*:

What kind of yoke is that of two believers, sharing one hope, one desire, one discipline, one and the same service? Both are brethren, both fellow-servants; there is no difference of spirit or of flesh. They truly are two in one flesh, and where the flesh is one, the spirit is one also. Together they pray, together prostrate themselves, together perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally are both in the Church of God; equally at the banquet of God; equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither keeps secrets from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. . . . Between the two echo psalms and hymns; and they mutually challenge each other as to which shall better chant to their Lord. When Christ sees and hears such things, he rejoices. To these he sends his own peace. Where two are, he is also there. Where he is, the evil one is not.⁵⁰

Here we have as explicit an acknowledgement of the equality of partners in Christian marriage, and as moving a tribute to matrimony itself, as is to be found anywhere in early Christian literature. Actually, Tertullian only denigrates marriage when contrasting it with his higher call of continence. Both are prophylactics to the devil, and his emphasis upon the latter may best be appreciated in light of his respect for the former. As much opposed to the proscription of marriage as to its permitted recurrence, Tertullian reminds the Marcionite that "if there is to be no marriage, there is no sanctity."⁵¹

As in the case of modesty, it is Tertullian's belief that "continence has been shown us by the Lord as an instrument for attaining to eternity."⁵² This helps to explain his passionate

few theological points to that explanation, as well as a warning to any who would take too many liberties with this admittedly provocative material.

⁴⁹He continues, "En effet, il est sévère pour la femme qui doit porter l'expation de son péché, elle qui a été 'la première à deserter la loi divine' et qui a brisé l'image de Dieu, condamnant a mort le Fils de Dieu," (*Tertullien*, 45).

⁵⁰*Ux.* II. 8. 7-9. This and two analogous tracts are conveniently collected in W. P. LeSaint, *Tertullian. Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage: To his Wife; An Exhortation to Chastity; Monogamy*, Ancient Christian Writers 13 (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1951).

⁵¹*Marc.* I. 29. 5.

⁵²Three forms of celibacy are reckoned accountable for sanctification:

insistency in arguing on its behalf. To his recently widowed friend he exclaims,

How many men and women there are whose position in ecclesiastical orders is due to continence, who preferred to be wedded to God, who restored the honor of their flesh, and who already have declared themselves to be children of eternity, by slaying in themselves the concupiscence of lust, and all else that could not be admitted within paradise. . . . All who wish to be received into paradise ought at least to begin to cease from that thing from which paradise is preserved.⁵³

The importance of the flesh to one of Tertullian's schemes of redemption has already been discussed. Here it serves a somewhat different function through being maintained in the same sanctified state into which it will be received. If mortification of the flesh is to a certain extent required by such a system, Tertullian's ultimate intention is quite the opposite. One must take into consideration both the practical consequences and the desired results of Tertullian's relentless rigorism. However, whether rooted in a fear of human sexuality, or chiefly inspired by the promise of eternal life, his preoccupation with the claims of modesty and chastity on Christians of both sexes cannot be ascribed to a simple disdain for women. One need not embrace Tertullian's deprecations in order to appreciate the consistency with which they are enjoined on each and all alike.

Martyrdom. In his book *Tertullians Ethik*, Theodor Brandt describes as paradoxical Tertullian's image of woman. "There are two clear ideas here which cannot be easily reconciled: her sin and weakness, on the one hand, and her creation and answerability to the same moral law, on the other."⁵⁴ Brandt's reference is to *De cultu* I.1: "Here woman clearly proves herself to be the weaker party."⁵⁵ In a note he defends this as "on the whole, Tertullian's point of view," citing only a single indecisive passage for

virginity from birth; virginity from rebirth, that is, from the moment of baptism; and, chaste monogamy, often initiated upon the death of one's spouse and maintained by continence thereafter.

⁵³*Exhort. cast.* 13. 4.

⁵⁴(Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1929) 194. Stücklin (ed. *De virginibus velandis*, 205) poses the problem in similar terms: "Hinsichtlich der Stellung der Frau in der Gemeinde nimmt Tertullian eine Stellung ein, die wiederum von zwei Faktoren bestimmt ist: Einerseits anerkennt er die Frau als gleichwertige Glaubensschwester, andererseits scheint ihm das weibliche Geschlecht besonders schuldbeladen, da alle Frauen an der Ursünde ihrer Stammutter Eva teilhaben."

⁵⁵Brandt, *Tertullians Ethik*, 193.

corroboration.⁵⁶ But Tertullian makes no allowance for this supposed weakness when it comes to martyrdom. "I fear the neck, strung with pearl and emerald nooses, will give no place for the sword," he writes. "Wherefore, O blessed ones, let us meditate on hardships and we shall not feel them; let us abandon luxuries and we shall not desire them. Let us stand prepared for every violence, possessing nothing that we fear to leave behind."⁵⁷

To Tertullian, "weakness" and "strength" are the respective attributes not of women and men, but of flesh and spirit. To a mix of Christian prisoners awaiting martyrdom he writes:

Perhaps the flesh will dread the heavy sword, and the elevated cross, and the beasts' mad rage, and the capital punishment of flames, and all the executioner's talent for torture. But let the spirit respond to itself and to the flesh, that these things, while very painful, have, even so, been received with equanimity and with acute desire for the sake of fame and glory, not only by men, but also by women, that you, O blessed ones, too may be worthy of your sex.⁵⁸

Challenging the assumption that martyrdom may be too much to ask of women, Tertullian inspires them to fulfill a promise equal to that of men. This he does in part by choosing pertinent exempla from history. Exactly half of his illustrations in *Ad martyras*, each a model of fortitude, are of women. This same pattern is adapted elsewhere by Tertullian to the specific requirements of like passages in *Ad nationes* and the *Apology*.⁵⁹

As the ultimate sanctification, martyrdom is commended by Tertullian to each and all alike as a more perfect baptism. "Uncleanness," he writes, "is washed away in baptism, of course, but the stains of it are made immaculately white through martyrdom."⁶⁰ While it is far from clear, Tertullian may even have believed that martyrs alone were resurrected directly, all other Christians being obliged to wait in Hades for the judgment

⁵⁶Ibid., n. 2.

⁵⁷*Cult.* II. 13. 4-5.

⁵⁸*Ad Martyras* 4. 2-3.

⁵⁹*Nat.* I. 18; *Apol.* 50. The most striking of Tertullian's exempla is that of Dido, whose story he tells in its Carthaginian rather than Roman version. That is, she preferred to burn rather than remarry (*Apol.* 50. 5). On one occasion Tertullian even presents her as a judge of Christians less protective than she of their sanctity (*Mon.* 17. 2). Such is the virtue of continence and the efficacy of martyrdom, that a pagan queen, dead centuries before the birth of Christ, should be accorded priority over baptised Christians, who, interpreting the word of the apostle, chose rather to remarry than to burn.

⁶⁰*Scorpiace* 12. 10.

day.⁶¹ He claims that Perpetua, martyred early in the third century in Carthage, had envisioned only martyrs in paradise, adding, "the key to unlocking paradise completely is your own blood."⁶² The consequence would seem to be salvation by works alone, and Tertullian's teachings on martyrdom represent the furthest extension of his system of sanctification by moral purity. In any event, sex proves in no way a qualifying factor for what is considered by Tertullian the most difficult and glorious of all endeavors. Just as he refuses to acknowledge human claims of weakness, of the flesh for instance, as extenuating factors, there is certainly no provision taken for a weaker sex by one who writes, "seek not to die on cosey couches, nor in miscarriages, nor in soft fevers, but to die the martyr's death."⁶³

III. *Regni ianua*: the Gateway to the Kingdom

We are distanced from Tertullian by many things, not the least of them his rigorism. As indicated above, its theological roots can be traced to his conception of the history of salvation.⁶⁴ On the one hand, he perceives the same forces at work in his own day that conspired to precipitate the original falling from grace. That is, he believes that Christians, having also been promised eternal life

⁶¹*An.* 55.

⁶²*Ibid.* 55. 5.

⁶³*De fuga in persecutione* 9. 3: evidently a dictum of the New Prophecy. Two aspects of Tertullian's acceptance of the paraclete are of particular relevance to the question of his attitude toward women. First is the role of the coming of the paraclete in the unfolding drama of salvation history. Since Christ had already done what he could in making sanctification for Christians through baptism possible, Tertullian might look to the paraclete for such revelations as would confirm Christians in their determination to persist in a manner befitting their sanctity, through modesty, continence, martyrdom, etc. Second, in the words of R. Gregor Smith, the paraclete "liberated his thought with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit. The grand conception that the Spirit is utterly free in His workings, and that the Church is consequently a living company capable of being led into all truth is the assumption underlying all of Tertullian's work" ("Tertullian and Montanism," *Theology* 46 [1943] 134). While precipitating his rift from the Church, this principle contributes directly to Tertullian's enormous respect for the spiritual authority of individual believers. By virtue of his respect for the pure who see visions (*Exhort. cast.* 10. 5), he derives both personal inspiration and matter for his teachings from such individuals as Perpetua, the Montanist prophetesses Prisca and Maximilla, and the woman in his congregation who saw visions during worship, such as that of the corporeal soul (*An.* 9. 4).

⁶⁴See Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 235-300, for a valuable assessment of the history of salvation in Tertullian's thought.

through the redeeming action of Christ, are in danger of relapsing into sin and death. A major difference between the two situations is that one now supposedly knows what Adam did not, and should therefore be expected to act more prudently than he. Enhanced vigilance comes with the knowledge of what this penalty death actually entails. One grows to appreciate the very real consequences attendant upon the breaking of God's ordinances. On the other hand, Tertullian makes bold to postulate the future in order that his fellow Christians can anticipate in their own lives the promise of the Kingdom. He teaches that the more one conforms to the set standards of heaven, the closer one comes to an assurance of salvation. That which in heaven one will cease to desire, one must check one's longing for while still on earth. In practice this means a gradual self-perfection in emulation of angelic likeness. Flesh immortal neither marries, nor has sex, nor wears jewels; flesh redeemed, stamped with the baptismal seal, must adhere to the same high standards, or squander, with its sanctity, its claim to eternal life.

As conceived by Tertullian, the emoluments of salvation justify each of the various stages leading up to it, including the first. By this token the fall becomes a requisite part of salvation history. While Adam's sin introduced the need for redemption, it also made salvation possible. In fact, the final victory over the devil occasions a return from this present life to a paradise even more glorious than that which was forfeited.⁶⁵ Tertullian's treatise devoted to paradise is not extant, but there remain several hints in his other writings that will give us an inkling of his impressions. In *De resurrectione*, to those who would contend that the second paradise is none other than the first, Tertullian responds, "even so, a restoration of paradise will seem to be promised to the flesh, whose lot it was to dwell there and tend it."⁶⁶ In *Adversus Marcionem*, he claims that the resurrected flesh is itself, "the gate through which one enters into the kingdom (*ianua regni*)."⁶⁷ To make this passage good, the risen flesh is changed; humankind is suited for immortality, "translated, in fact, into the condition and sanctity of angels," as Tertullian describes it to his wife.⁶⁸ This does not imply a loss of humanity, but a heightening of it. "Christ said not 'They shall *be* angels,'" he writes elsewhere, "but he said,

⁶⁵*Marc.* II. 10.

⁶⁶*Res. mort.* 26. 14.

⁶⁷*Marc.* V. 10. 13.

⁶⁸*Ux.* I. 1. 5.

'They shall be equal unto the angels,' that he might preserve their humanity unimpaired. When he ascribed an angelic likeness to the flesh, he did not take from it its proper substance."⁶⁹

How does all of this affect the status of the sexes? In *De cultu* I, following upon the "gateway passage," Tertullian reminds his listeners that "you too have as your promise the same angelic nature, the same sex, and the same advancement to the dignity of judging as do men."⁷⁰ This does not mean that in heaven women will finally become men, any more than it does that they both will become angels. Rather, it indicates that, according to Tertullian, everyone in heaven assumes an angelic likeness, which is understood to mean a loss of specific sexuality for women and men alike. When contesting the elaborate speculations of the Valentinian gnostics, Tertullian states his own expectation unequivocally.

After I die I must return to that place where no one marries, where I must be clothed rather than stripped, where, even if I am stripped of my sex, I am classed among the angels, not as a male or female one. No one then will make a thing of me, in which they will discover masculinity.⁷¹

It has not been my purpose in this paper to suggest that Tertullian was a champion for woman's rights as understood today. A literalist in his interpretation of the scriptures, he was no different from others who followed the letter in respect to such matters as a woman's subordination to her husband, silence in church, or ordination to baptise and teach. However, the only liberation he knew was liberation in Christ from the limitations imposed by this age and the curse of mortality. I argue simply that Tertullian believed women and men to be equally capable of that liberation, both while on earth and also in heaven. That such a statement needed to be made is due in large measure to the ever more frequent citation of a single passage, *De cultu* I.1-2, which, abstracted from its context, and with no reference given to Tertullian's motives, can be employed to depict him as a misogynist. But this is to mistake concern, here with respect to woman's salvation, for belief, as inferred from the specific language through which that concern is expressed. Naturally it is difficult, at a remove of almost two millenia, to recover from

⁶⁹*Res. mort.* 62. 4.

⁷⁰*Cult.* I. 2. 5.

⁷¹*Adversus Valentinianos* 32. 5.

rhetoric the motive that informs it. It is even more so when the arguments advanced are alien and often offensive to modern sensibilities. However, to a certain extent, Tertullian faced the same problem in his own time. To those whom he could not expect to understand the theological grounds for his concern, pagans with little patience for Christian speculation, he provides a comprehensible motive for the tenor and scope of his prescribed morality. Perhaps we may profit in our own understanding of Tertullian by the words he offers them.

Though the things we maintain be deemed false and idle fancies, nevertheless they are necessary; though deemed absurd, they are useful: for they compel all who believe in them to be made better people, through the fear of eternal punishment and the hope of eternal bliss.⁷²

⁷²*Apol.* 49. 2.



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The Tyche Sacrifices in John Malalas: Virgin Sacrifice and Fourth-Century Polemical History*

BENJAMIN GARSTAD

Scattered throughout John Malalas' history of the world from Adam to Justinian there are some dozen accounts of virgins being sacrificed at the foundation of various cities.¹ In most cases the sacrifice is overseen by a king or ruler, after the sacrifice an image of the virgin selected is set up which becomes the cult statue of the civic *tyche*, and she gives her name to

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to George Huxley, Wolf Liebeschuetz, Jacob Stern, and Craig Williams who each showed great kindness and patience in reading over drafts of this paper with care and attention, and offering helpful corrections and advice. Where I have not followed the promptings of such wise men, I acknowledge I do so at my peril.

This paper is offered to the author's aunt, Alice Olsenberg, on the occasion of her seventy-fifth birthday. She is a woman in whom a quiet zeal has never compromised plain truth in all things.

¹ By Taurus at Gortyn: Malalas, 2.7, Perseus at Tarsus and possibly Iconium: 2.11, Iphigenia at Nyssa/Scythopolis: 5.35, Alexander the Great at Alexandria: 8.1, Seleucus at Antioch: 8.12, Seleucus at Laodicea: 8.17, Augustus at Ancyra and the province of Galatia: 9.13, Tiberius in building the theatre at Antioch: 10.10, Zarbus at Anazarbus: 10.53, Trajan in rebuilding Antioch: 11.9, Constantine at Constantinople: 13.7. For the text and citations of Malalas, I have employed the text of J. Thurn, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* (Berlin 2000). See esp. E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' world view" in *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. E. Jeffreys, et al., (Sydney 1990) 57; but also K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur* (München 1897) vol. i, 326; W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (New York 1927) 159 n. 1; C. Bosch, *Die kleinasiatischen Münzen der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 1935) Teil ii, Band I, 1 Hälfte, 258 n.194; G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton 1961) 74 n. 89; P. Bonnechere, *Le sacrifice humain en Grèce ancienne* (Athens/Liège 1994) 130–31 n. 544; C. Saliou, "Statues d'Antioche de Syrie dans la *Chronographie* de Malalas" in *Recherches sur la Chronique de Jean Malalas*, II, ed. S. Agusta-Boularot, et al., (Paris 2006) 69–95. Work on this topic is also currently being undertaken by Dolly Rosenberg of Tel-Aviv University.

the *tyche* of the city. These *tyche* sacrifices are carried out by the heroes of Greek legend such as Perseus and Iphigenia, by Alexander and Seleucus, by a number of Roman emperors, and finally—in a modified form—by Constantine. Seleucus' foundation of Antioch and initiation of one of the most prominent civic *tyche* cults (made famous through the statue of Eutychides, a model for other figures),² according to Malalas' *Chronicle*, offers a good representative example of these narratives:

... where the village of Bottia was, across from Iopolis, there he³ [Seleucus Nicator] staked out the foundations of the wall, and through the agency of Amphion the high priest and officiant of the mysteries he sacrificed a virgin girl by the name of Aimathe in the space between the city and the river on the 22nd of Artemisios, or May, at the first hour of the day, as the sun was rising. He called [the city] after the name of his own son who was called Antiochus Soter. And he straightway established a temple, which he called that of Zeus Bottios. And he swiftly raised the tremendous walls through the agency of Xenarios the architect. He set up a bronze stele in the form of a statue of the maiden who had been offered as a sacrifice as the *tyche* of the city above the river, and at once he made a sacrifice to her as the *tyche*.⁴

Trajan's *tyche* sacrifice, also at Antioch, includes some important details:

And this most pious Trajan made foundations in Antioch the Great, beginning with his first foundation, the gate called the Middle Gate near the temple of Ares, where the torrent of the Parmenios flows down, close to what is now called the Macellum. He carved above an image of the she-wolf nursing Romus [Romulus] and Remus, by which it would be recognized that this was a Roman foundation. There he sacrificed a comely virgin girl of the city by the name of Calliope for the sake of the redemption and cleansing of the city, and he held a bridal procession for

² See T. Dohrn, *Die Tyche von Antiochia* (Berlin 1960).

³ Here I have followed Jacoby's tentative emendation of διεχάραξαν to διεχάραξεν (*FGrH* 854 F 10; app. crit. 3 C² 940, 23) noted by Thurn (2000) 151, otherwise there is no main verb for the singular participles.

⁴ Malalas, 8.12: ὅπου ἦν ἡ κώμη ἢ καλουμένη Βωπτία ἀντικρυς τῆς Ἰωπόλεως, ἐκεῖ διεχάραξαν τὰ θεμέλια τοῦ τείχους, θυσιάσας δι' Ἀμφιονος ἀρχιερέως καὶ τελεστοῦ κόρην παρθένον ὀνόματι Αἰμάθην κατὰ μέσου τῆς πόλεως καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ μηνὶ Ἀρτεμισίῳ τῷ καὶ μαΐῳ κβ', ὥρα ἡμερινῇ α', τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνατέλλοντος, καλέσας αὐτὴν Ἀντιόχειαν εἰς ὄνομα τοῦ ἰδίου αὐτοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Ἀντιόχου Σωτήρος, κτίσας εὐθέως καὶ ἱερὸν, ὃ ἐκάλεσε Βωπτίου Διὸς, ἀνεγείρας καὶ τὰ τεῖχη σπουδαίως φοβερὰ διὰ Ξεναρίου ἀρχιτέκτονος, στήσας ἀνδριάντος στήλην χαλκὴν τῆς σφαγιασθείσης κόρης τύχην τῇ πόλει ὑπεράνω τοῦ ποταμοῦ, εὐθέως ποιήσας αὐτῇ τῇ τύχῃ θυσίαν.

her. And he immediately repaired the two great porticoes, and established many other public works in the city of Antioch, among them the baths and the aqueduct, diverting the water which flowed from the springs of Daphne to the [ravines] called 'the Wilds' (*Agriai*),⁵ and gave his name to the baths and the aqueduct. And he completed the theatre of Antioch, which was unfinished, setting up in it, on top of four small pillars in the middle of the nymphaeon of the proscenion, a gilded bronze stele of the maiden sacrificed by him. She was sitting over the river Orontes, depicted as the *tyche* of the city being crowned by the kings Seleucus and Antiochus.⁶

The fuller context of this passage is also significant: it is followed by an account of Trajan's execution of the Christian bishop of Antioch, and of five Christian virgins, statues of whom are also set up by the emperor.⁷ Constantine apparently also required a *tyche* for his new capital at Constantinople, but, it is made clear, he inaugurated this *tyche* without resorting to human sacrifice:

Making a bloodless sacrifice to God, he [Constantine] called the *tyche* of the city renewed by him and reestablished in his own name Anthousa. This city was founded at first by Phidalia, and the *tyche* of the city was then called Ceroe.⁸

⁵ For this interpretation of the passage, I depend on G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria: from Seleucus to the Arab conquest* (Princeton 1961) 221.

⁶ Malalas, 11.9: ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς εὐσεβέστατος Τραϊανὸς ἔκτισεν ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τῇ μεγάλῃ ἀρξάμενος πρῶτον κτίσμα τὴν λεγομένην μέσσην πύλιν πλησίον τοῦ ἱεροῦ τοῦ Ἀρεως, ὅπου ὁ Παρμενίος χεῖμαρρος κατέρχεται, ἔγγιστα τοῦ νυνὶ λεγομένου Μακέλλου, γλύψας ἄνω ἄγαλμα λυκαίνης τρεφούσας τὸν Ῥῶμον καὶ τὸν Ῥῆμον, διὰ τὸ γινώσκεισθαι, ὅτι Ῥωμαῖόν ἐστι τὸ κτίσμα, θυσιάσας ἐκεῖ παρθένον κόρην εὐπρεπῇ πολιτίδᾳ ὀνόματι Καλλιόπῃ ὑπὲρ λύτρου καὶ ἀποκαθαρισμοῦ τῆς πόλεως, νυμφαγωγίαν αὐτῇ ποιήσας. καὶ εὐθέως ἀνήγειρε τοὺς δύο ἐμβόλους τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ ἄλλα δὲ πολλὰ ἔκτισεν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ Ἀντιόχου πόλει καὶ δημόσιον καὶ ἀγωγὸν, ἀποστρέψας τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν πηγῶν Δάφνης ἐκχεόμενον εἰς τὰς λεγομένας Ἀγρίας, ἐπιθήσας καὶ τῷ δημοσίῳ καὶ τῷ ἀγωγῷ εἰς τὸ ἴδιον ὄνομα, καὶ τὸ θέατρον δὲ τῆς αὐτῆς Ἀντιοχείας ἀνεπλήρωσεν ἀτελεῖς ὄν, στήσας ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπεράνω τεσσάρων κινδῶν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ νυμφαίου τοῦ προσκηνίου τῆς σφαιγιασθείσης ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κόρης στήλιν χαλκῇν κεχρυσωμένην, καθημένην ἐπάνω τοῦ Ὀρόντου ποταμοῦ εἰς λόγον τύχης τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως, στεφομένην ὑπὸ Σελεύκου καὶ Ἀντιόχου βασιλέων.

⁷ Malalas, 11.10.

⁸ Malalas, 13.7: τὴν δὲ τύχην τῆς πόλεως τῆς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἀνανεωθείσης καὶ εἰς ὄνομα αὐτοῦ κτισθείσης ποιήσας τῷ θεῷ θυσίαν ἀναμακτον ἐκάλεσεν Ἀνθουσάν. ἥτις πόλις ἐκτίσθη ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπὸ Φιδάλιας· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τότε τὴν τύχην αὐτῆς Κερσίν.

This is the last mention of a civic *tyche* in Malalas' *Chronicle*.

As they are presented by Malalas, these accounts of *tyche* sacrifice have no clear purpose or overall structure. Malalas does not use these narratives as the basis of negative evaluations of those involved in them, nor does he make their significance explicit. In fact, these narratives are usually attached to otherwise praiseworthy, or at least neutral, characters.⁹ The accounts of *tyche* sacrifice, however, demonstrate such consistency that they can safely be discussed as the fragments of a distinct work. If we can assign a specific context and compositional model to this work its purpose and structure should become apparent. In this paper we will develop the hypothesis that the *tyche* sacrifice narratives are fictions which belong to a Christian 'polemical history' composed in Antioch in the later fourth century. This history exploited the literary techniques of the novel and the rhetoric of Christian encomium and diatribe to praise Constantine as a unique model of kingship and damn Julian, who was rumoured to have engaged in human sacrifice, and all pagan rulers with him. The figure of the civic *tyche* is central to the author's attack on pagan kings, but his efforts to denigrate traditional *tyche* cults are set precariously beside his efforts to sanctify the *tyche* as it had been absorbed into the ceremonial and iconography of Christian empire.

Authorship and date

It is most unlikely that Malalas himself is the author of the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice. Malalas presents the *tyche* sacrifices blandly and dispassionately, among the other deeds and accomplishments of those who perform them, and balances them with positive appraisals of the rulers in question. If virgin sacrifice were an interest of Malalas himself, moreover, we should expect such famous incidents of virgin sacrifice in Greek myth as the—attempted—sacrifice of Iphigenia to be treated in a manner more consistent with the *tyche* sacrifices, or as the sacrifice of Polyxena to be more than merely alluded to.¹⁰ The assumption that the *tyche* sacrifices belong to one of his sources also explains Malalas' use of '*tyche*' in the abstract, especially in reference to 'the *tyche* of the Christians' or to victory

⁹ For instance, the account of the human sacrifices and persecutions of Trajan introduces the emperor as 'the most pious Trajan' (θειοτάτου Τραϊανού; Malalas, 11.8). This may be a formulaic title (it is less likely to be ironic), but it obviously goes unaffected by the acts that are ascribed to the emperor.

¹⁰ See Malalas, 5.6, 10, 13.

through Christ and the *tyche* of a Christian emperor,¹¹ which would otherwise seem incongruous with the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice. Malalas' use of these accounts at second hand might, furthermore, explain the omissions in those cases in which details we expect to find in the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice are missing.¹² It seems most likely, then, that the narratives of *tyche* sacrifice were composed by one of Malalas' sources, or the source of one of his sources, and that Malalas found these remarkable stories concerning a number of the kings he was chronicling and included them as just a few more events in the lives of his subjects—altogether heedless of any overall pattern or polemical intent to them.

Malalas does not cite any source for the *tyche* sacrifices directly, but two of the accounts are connected with citations of one Bouttios (or Bottios), a historian only known from three references in Malalas.¹³ In the first instance, Euripides' mythical account of the conception of Perseus is contrasted with the historicizing or rationalizing version of Bouttios in which Zeus bribes Danae with a sum of gold.¹⁴ Malalas' account of Perseus goes on to relate that the hero performed a virgin sacrifice in founding

¹¹ Malalas, 16.17: καὶ ἐνέκησεν ὁ σωτὴρ Χριστὸς καὶ ἡ τοῦ βασιλείως τύχη; Malalas, 18.77, app.: Νικᾷ ἡ τύχη τῶν χριστιανῶν. Cf. Malalas, 7.10: ἡ τύχη Ῥωμαίων ἀεὶ νικᾷ τοὺς πολέμους.

¹² E.g., Perseus founds Iconium on the site of the village of Amandra, and names the *tyche* of the city Persis after himself, but there is no virgin sacrifice to initiate the *tyche* cult (Malalas, 2.11); Perseus sacrifices Parthenope at Tarsus, but there is no mention of a *tyche* (Malalas, 2.11); likewise, Alexander sacrifices a virgin at the foundation of Alexandria and Augustus does the same at the foundation of Ancyra, but no *tyche* is mentioned (Malalas, 8.1, 9.13); when it was first founded by Phidalia, before Constantine's re-foundation, the *tyche* of Byzantium is supposed to have been called Ceroe, but there is no account, as we would expect, of Phidalia's sacrifice of a virgin named Ceroe (Malalas, 13.7).

¹³ See E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' sources" in Jeffreys, *Studies in John Malalas*, 174. Three inconsistent versions of this historian's name are found in the text of Malalas: Βούττιος, Βόττιος, Βώττιος. My use of 'Bouttios' throughout is perhaps arbitrary, but this form is the first to appear, and it does seem more consistent with similar names found in other contexts. BOVTIVS appears as the name of a potter in Imperial Gaul; H. Dragendorff, "Terra sigillata. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der griechischen und römischen Keramik" *Bonner Jahrbücher* 96 (1895) 107 (*PW* iii.1, 800). Boutzios /-us was the owner of seal bearing a cruciform monogram in the middle to late sixth century; *PLRE* iii.a, 248 (Zacos 2789). Bottas was a—possibly Persian—*gloriosissimus* in Egypt in 621; *P. Oxy.* 1921 (a. 621); *PLRE*, iii.a, 247.

¹⁴ Malalas, 2.11. In a similar manner Dionysius of Halicarnassus opens his account of Heracles in Italy by contrasting the "more mythical" and "more truthful" versions; *Ant. Rom.* 1.39.1.

Tarsus, and possibly Amandra (as well as ritually killing the virgin Medusa in order to make a talisman out of her head).¹⁵ No other source is mentioned in the chapters on Perseus, and Malalas seems to follow Bouttios (or an intermediary) for the Perseus narrative as a whole. The contrast between Euripides and a 'historical version' is, moreover, consistent with the adaptation of Euripides' drama in Malalas' account of Orestes and Iphigenia, in which there is also a *tyche* sacrifice at the foundation of Nyssa (Scythopolis) in Palestine.¹⁶ In the second instance, Bouttios is the only source cited for Malalas' brief account of the career of Alexander the Great, which includes the sacrifice of a virgin when Alexandria is founded at the site of Rhakoustis.¹⁷ No other authorities are associated with the *tyche* sacrifices in Malalas, and, taking their consistency into account, it seems plausible to credit Bouttios with all of the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice.¹⁸

The third reference to Bouttios in Malalas cites him as a source on the emperor Domitian's exile of St. John to Patmos and his persecution of the Christians.¹⁹ First, and most importantly, this sympathetic interest in the persecution of the Christians indicates that Bouttios himself was a Christian. Secondly, it suggests that Bouttios might be driving at some kind of connection between his seemingly disparate subjects: famous rulers of the

¹⁵ Malalas, 2.11.

¹⁶ See Appendix I.

¹⁷ Malalas, 8.1. If, as we shall argue, Bouttios treated the kings of legend and history and the persecuting emperors as various examples of a single, rather sinister, type, it is noteworthy that Alexander is here described as setting out 'like a leopard' (καὶ εὐθέως ὡς πάρδαλις ἐκείθεν ὁρμήσας ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος), since Ignatius (whose martyrdom is mentioned in connection with Trajan's visit to Antioch, which we have seen includes a *tyche* sacrifice; Malalas, 11.10) refers to the soldiers who take him to the beasts in Rome as 'leopards' (*Ep. ad Rom.*, 5.1: ἐνδεδεμένος δέκα λεοπάρδους, ὃ ἐστὶν στρατιωτικὸν τάγμα); see B. Baldwin, "Leopards, Roman Soldiers, and the Historia Augusta," *ICS* 10 (1985) 281–83. According to Strabo (17.1.19) the *boukoloi* (or 'rangers') were stationed to patrol the harbour of Pharos against strangers, and given Rhakoustis as a dwelling (17.1.6), and according to Cassius Dio (72.4), and the novels of Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus, and probably Lollianus, these same *boukoloi* practised human sacrifice (see J. Winkler, "Lollianos and the Desperadoes" *JHS* 100 [1980] 175–81), so that the inhabitants of the site of Alexandria at its foundation are identified as practitioners of human sacrifice, which might offer some explanation of Bouttios' ascription of human sacrifice to Alexander at this site.

¹⁸ It remains to be determined how Bouttios and the *tyche* sacrifice narratives are related to Pausanias (*FGrH* 854), another one of Malalas' sources, who is cited for the career of Perseus and the foundation of Antioch (Malalas, 2.12, 8.8, 18).

¹⁹ Malalas, 10.48.

past, persecuting emperors, and the perpetrators of virgin sacrifice. Such a unified subject is consistent with Trajan's *tyche* sacrifice at Antioch in its context, where a virgin sacrifice by a pagan emperor is connected with the martyrdom of Christian virgins by the same.²⁰ We shall further develop this idea when we discuss the import of virgin sacrifice in Christian literature, as well as the political implications of the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice.

In addition to being a Christian, Bouttios, we may say with some confidence, was Antiochene. 'Bottios' (a variant of Bouttios) was an epithet of Zeus at one of his temples at Antioch, and Bottia was the name of the village on whose site Antioch was founded,²¹ so the name seems to have had local associations. Apart from the sacrifices at such major centres as Alexandria and Constantinople, most of the *tyche* sacrifices, which we have credited to Bouttios, occur at smaller, specific sites clustered in and around Antioch.²² Bouttios' work was exploited by the Antiochene chronicler Malalas, who exhibits a special interest in the sources on the history of his home city.²³ Bouttios' work, we shall argue, also reflects Antioch's general animosity toward Julian, which prompted that emperor to write his *Misopogon*.²⁴ The rumours of Julian's own participation in rites of human sacrifice, which apparently informed the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice (see below), also seem to have circulated predominantly in the east and in the vicinity of Antioch.²⁵

It is somewhat more difficult to determine the date at which these *tyche* sacrifice narratives were composed than it has been to suggest a name for their author and establish his religious proclivities. The broad parameters are clear enough: some time between the foundation of Constantinople in

²⁰ Malalas, 11.9–10.

²¹ Libanius, *Or.* 11.76 (Ζεὺς Βοττιαῖος); Malalas, 8.12 (Βοττία, Βοττιος Ζεὺς). See Downey, *A History of Antioch*, 54–55, 68.

²² There are three reports of *tyche* sacrifice situated in Antioch itself, others supposed to occur in Tarsus, Laodicea, Anazarbos, Ancyra and the province of Galatia, and possibly Iconium. Further afield such incidents are reported from Gortyn on Crete, Nyssa or Scythopolis in Palestine, and, of course, Alexandria and Constantinople.

²³ See B. Croke, "Malalas, the man and his work" in Jeffreys, *Studies in John Malalas*, 6–11.

²⁴ See G. Downey, "Julian the Apostate at Antioch" *ChHist* 8 (1939) 303–15.

²⁵ These rumours are reported by Gregory of Nazianzus and Theodoret, who, as writers in Greek, are presumably more likely to have access to stories current in the eastern, Greek portion of the Empire. Gregory (*Or.* 4.92) sets one of the reports of Julian's involvement in human sacrifice in the palace at Antioch itself, and Theodoret (*H.E.* 3.21) reports Julian's sacrifice of a woman in nearby Carrhae.

324 (the latest event mentioned in the narratives) and the conclusion of Malalas' *Chronicle* in 565 (or 574), but it should be possible to narrow this interval considerably. The *tyche* sacrifices, as we shall argue, reflect not only on the reign of one of their explicit subjects, Constantine, but also on an unspoken subject, the reign of Julian. This offers a new *terminus post quem*, namely the end of the Apostate's brief reign in 363, but no firm *terminus ante quem*, since interest in Julian's reign and the development of scurrilous legends concerning him continued for centuries after his death. In order to suggest a *terminus ante quem* we will have to engage in further speculation on the influence and content of Bouttios' work.

Some of the passages of Malalas which we have identified as being derived from Bouttios have certain affinities with the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, a work whose original composition can be dated to shortly after 412.²⁶ These affinities suggest that the compiler of the *Excerpta*, as well as Malalas, employed Bouttios as a source either directly or at second-hand. In Malalas' account of Perseus, with which Bouttios is associated, Perseus is said to be the son of Picus-Zeus, along with Hermes and Heracles, and to have been taught sorcery by his father.²⁷ The 'Picus-Zeus narrative' is a novel and elaborate historicizing mythography of the fourth-century, preserved in versions in the *Excerpta* and in Malalas,²⁸ in the undoubtedly genuine portions of which Picus-Zeus is supposed to be the father of Faunus-Hermes and Heracles, and to have engaged in witchcraft and

²⁶ For the text of the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, see C. Frick, *Chronica Minora* (Leipzig 1892) 184–370. The *Excerpta* was originally composed in Greek, but survives only in a sixth- or seventh-century Latin translation prepared in Merovingian Gaul by a translator inexperienced in both Greek and Latin. The main chronography ends at A.D. 387, but mentions the death of Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, in 412. A *laterculus* was added which brings the list of emperors down to Anastasius (r. 491–518). See Frick (1892) lxxiii–ccix; B. Garstad, "The *Excerpta Latina Barbari* and the 'Picus-Zeus Narrative,'" *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 34 (2002) 259–313.

²⁷ Malalas, 2.11.

²⁸ For the texts, see Frick, 234.22–240.11 = Garstad, "The *Excerpta Latina Barbari*," 270–74; Malalas, 1.8–2.2. On the Picus-Zeus narrative, see E. Jeffreys, "The *Chronicle* of John Malalas: A Commentary" in *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?*, ed. P. Allen and E. Jeffreys, (Brisbane 1996) 52–74; Garstad, "The *Excerpta Latina Barbari*"; B. Garstad, "The Assyrian Hero's Romantic Interlude in Libya: a topos from Virgil in Pisander of Laranda, the Picus-Zeus Narrative, and Nonnus of Panopolis" *Eranos* 101 (2003) 6–16.

outrages against women which reflect those perpetrated by Perseus.²⁹ It is quite possible that Bouttios was the author of both the Picus-Zeus narrative and Malalas' story of Perseus, which would explain the links between them, and would be the first instance of material from Bouttios in the *Excerpta*.³⁰ Secondly, just as Euripides is contrasted with Bouttios as a source for the life of Perseus, and one of his plays is carefully followed in the account of Orestes and Iphigenia which includes a *tyche* sacrifice, Euripides is cited in the *Excerpta* as a source for the adventures of Heracles and specifically his erection of pillars at the western limits of the world.³¹ This exploitation of

²⁹ On magic and seduction in the Picus-Zeus narrative, see Garstad, "The *Excerpta Latina Barbari*," 299–301. The phrase used of Acrisius by Malalas, 2.11, τοῦ Ἀκριστοῦ τοῦ καταγομένου ἐκ τῆς Ἀργείων χώρας (Acrisius who had come from the land of the Argives), also seems intended to distance the story of Perseus' conception from Greece, and perhaps set it in Italy, where Picus-Zeus is supposed to have ruled and seduced the mothers of his many sons. Moreover, in both the Picus-Zeus narrative and the account of Perseus there are supernatural benefactions received from heaven: the tongs of Hephaestus in the former, and the fire of the Ionitans in the latter.

³⁰ There are, however, certain chronological discrepancies which would have to be resolved before such an idea could be finally accepted; see Garstad, "The *Excerpta Latina Barbari*," 297–98.

³¹ Frick, 238.23–240.2: *Et fugiens Erysthea, regem Thibeorum, cum omnia sua nauigauit et regnauit occidentis partibus: unde imagines auro uestitos sibi composuit in nouissimis occidentales partibus, qui et usque hodie stant: pro quo et Eurypidus ille poeta memorauit* (Fleeing Eurystheus, the king of Thebes, he sailed away with all his household[?] and reigned in the regions of the west. So he made images of himself clothed in gold in the furthest western regions, which stand even to this day; Euripides the poet recalls these matters). Malalas, 6.16, has a very close description of the Pillars of Hercules: ὁθεν καὶ στήλας αὐτῷ χρυσοῦ καὶ πορφύρας ἀνέστησαν οἱ Ἰταλοὶ καὶ βασιλεῖς, ἦτοι ῥῆγες, ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ βασιλεύσαντες ἐν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις τῆς δύσεως μέρεσιν· αἰτνες στήλαι ἕως τοῦ παρόντος ἵστανται (whence the Italian kings, or *reges*, of his [Heracles'] family who ruled in the furthest regions of the West set up gold and porphyry steles to him; these steles stand up to the present day). The ascription of the construction to the descendants of Heracles and not the hero himself is probably an adjustment by Malalas. The citation of Euripides has also inexplicably fallen out. Both sentences agree, however, that the monuments in question are golden, located in the furthest region of the west, and remain standing to the present day; the ὁθεν in Malalas also makes sense of the introductory *unde* in the *Excerpta*. See Garstad, "The *Excerpta Latina Barbari*," 308–9. A similar phrase is also used of the stele which Perseus set up in Iconium, which is associated with his sacrifice and the naming of the city's *tyche* after himself, Malalas, 2.11: καὶ ἔστησεν ἑαυτῷ στήλην ἔξω τῶν πυλῶν, βασιτάζουσιν τὸ ἀντεικόνισμα τῆς Γοργόνης, καὶ θυσίαν ποιήσας ἐκάλεσεν τὴν

Euripides seems to be taken over from Bouttios in both cases. In the third place, Bouttios is the only source cited in Malalas' account of Alexander, and he is specifically cited in regard to the fact that Alexander conquers not only the Persians, but the Assyrians, Medes, Parthians, and Babylonians as well, and frees the Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians from their subjection to these peoples.³² An almost identical conflation of eastern peoples, along with the indication that Alexander freed the Romans from their power and made them a part of his empire, appears in the *Excerpta*.³³ Two such

τύχην τῆς πόλεως Περόϊδα εἰς τὸ ἴδιον αὐτοῦ ὄνομα· ἦτις στήλη ἕως τοῦ παρόντος ἵσταται ἐκεῖ (and he set up for himself outside the gates a stele, bearing an image of the Gorgon, and making a sacrifice he named the *tyche* of the city Persis after his own name; this stele stands there up to the present day). The *Excerpta* mentions the Pillars of Hercules again as the boundaries of the empires of Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander (Frick, 260.7, 270.18–19), and Euripides again in lists of prominent Greek 'philosophers' (Frick, 266.7, 268.5).

³² Malalas, 8.1: καὶ νικήσας τὸν Δαρεῖον, βασιλέα Περσῶν, τὸν Ἀσσαλάμου, παρέλαβεν αὐτὸν καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν χώραν Ἀσσυρίων καὶ Μήδων καὶ Πάρθων καὶ Βαβυλωνίων καὶ Περσῶν καὶ πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τῆς γῆς, καθὼς Βόττιος ὁ σοφώτατος συνεγράψατο, ἐλευθερώσας ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ τὰς πόλεις καὶ τὰς χώρας καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ Ἑλλήνων καὶ Αἰγυπτίων ἐκ τῆς Ἀσσυρίων καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Πάρθων καὶ Μήδων ὑποταγῆς καὶ δουλείας, ἀποδοὺς Ῥωμαίοις πάντα ἃ ἀπώλεσαν (Once he had defeated Darius, the king of the Perians, the son of Assalam, he took possession of him and his whole kingdom and the whole territory of the Assyrians and Medes and Parthians and Babylonians and Persians and all the kingdoms of the earth, as the most learned Bouttios has written, and this Alexander freed the cities and the territories and the whole country of the Romans and the Greeks and the Egyptians from subjection and slavery to the Assyrians and Persians and Parthians and Medes, returning to the Romans all that they had lost.). Malalas' eighth book opens with an almost identical list of eastern peoples as the ruling powers of the world and the enemies of Alexander. A similar conflation manifests itself when Malalas refers to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, as an 'Assyrian' (6.1, 3), and as a 'Persian' (18.2), and has the Median kings from Darius to Astyages and the Persian kings Cyrus and Cambyses rule 'the Assyrians' (6.4, 13).

³³ Frick, 244.12–23: *Post haec tradidit dominus deus regnum terrae Romanorum in manus Assyriorum, Chaldaeorum, et Persarum, et Midorum. Et tributaria facta est terra illa Assyriis, et mansit Roma sine regnum, usque dum suscitavit deus Alexandrum Macedonem et conditorem. Iste quidem pugnavit contra regem Persarum et superavit eum. Et tradidit dominus in manum eius regnum Assyriorum, et introiit in potestate regnum eorum, et concussit ciuitates Persarum et Medorum, et liberauit omnem terram Romanorum et Grecorum et Egyptiorum de seruitute Chaldaeorum, et leges posuit mundo* (After these things the Lord God delivered the kingdom of the land of the Romans into the hands of the Assyrians,

eccentric narratives of Alexander's career, with their obvious similarities, must have a common source: Bouttios. The *Excerpta* also exhibits Bouttios' concern with the persecution of Christians at the hands of Roman emperors,³⁴ and, finally, notes the foundation of Constantinople by Constantine.³⁵

The identification of Bouttios, the author of the *tyche* sacrifice narratives, as a source for the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* may remain tentative for the present. Nevertheless, I think the preliminary evidence is good enough to provide us with a working *terminus ante quem* of shortly after 412. This supplies us with a plausible—if not definite—date for Bouttios of some time in the latter half of the fourth century or the first decade of the fifth.

The *tyche* sacrifices and the *tyche* cult

The origins of the *tyche* cult are shrouded in mystery, but Bouttios—if we may so name the author of these narratives, for the sake of convenience, if not on account of certainty—does not seem to be engaged in speculative religious history. The suggestion that every instance of a widespread cult originated with an act of human sacrifice must be read as an attack on that

Chaldeans, and Persians, and Medes. And this land was made tributary to the Assyrians, and Rome remained without dominion [*or a king*] until the time when God raised up Alexander of Macedon, the Founder. He fought against the king of the Persians and defeated him. And the Lord delivered into his hand the kingdom of the Assyrians, and he entered into power over their kingdoms, and he overthrew the cities of the Persians and the Medes, and he freed the whole country of the Romans and the Greeks and the Egyptians from slavery to the Chaldeans, and he gave laws to the world). Note the similarity of construction: ἐκ τῆς Ἀσσυρίων ... ὑποταγῆς καὶ δουλείας / *de seruitute Chaldeorum*. Malalas, 8.3, also notes that Alexander gave laws to his newly conquered territories. As in the opening sentence of Malalas, book viii, there is the explicit idea that God ordained Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire and the powers of the east. The conflation of these same eastern peoples occurs at Frick, 260.1–5. Nebuchadnezzar is called 'king of the Assyrians' (Frick, 256.22–23), and his realm is said to stretch to the Pillars of Heracles and include 'all the country of the Romans' (Frick, 260.6–11). Alexander is supposed to give laws to the Romans, among others (Frick, 268.16–18).

³⁴ The *Excerpta* notes the martyrdom of Peter and Paul (Frick, 348.28–350.3; cf. Malalas, 10.35–37), but not the fate of their fellow Apostle, John, mentioned by Bouttios. There is a lacuna (see Frick, 354) where we would expect to find parallel information, if any, on the reign of Trajan. But the persecutions under Diocletian are mentioned (Frick, 354.23–26).

³⁵ Frick, 356.24.

cult, denigrating its origins and consequently denying its current validity. We may fairly ask, then, what prompted Bouttios' attack on the *tyche* cult. His Christianity can only be part of the reason. His fuller context and the nature of the *tyche* cult itself must also contribute to an explanation.

The Imperial *tyche*, or personal *tyche* of the ruler—and we may note that each example of *tyche* sacrifice is directed by a ruler—was an old *nemesis* of the Christians.³⁶ Polycarp was enjoined by the proconsul at Smyrna to swear by the *tyche* of Caesar, and on account of his refusal he was martyred.³⁷ Clement of Alexandria critically notes that the Romans considered *Tyche* the greatest divinity, and that the pagans deify *tyche* along with a number of abstract concepts and natural substances.³⁸ Origen confirms that the Christians do not swear by the *tyche* of the emperor, because it is either an expression with no substantial reality or a demon.³⁹ Eusebius, writing on behalf of Constantine, argued that *tyche* was just a word and that it was unreasonable to assume that *tyche* was the power which governed the world.⁴⁰ The Church historians, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius, preferred synonyms to the word *tyche* itself in their explanations of historical causation.⁴¹ It is evident, therefore, that the idea, to say nothing of the cult, of *tyche* was considered antithetical to the Christian understanding of the world and codes of conduct.

Tyche was, however, popular as a concept and as a goddess, throughout antiquity.⁴² *Tyche* appears as a divinity in our earliest literary evidence for

³⁶ The Christian antipathy to the *tyche* may have been inherited from the Jewish scriptures. In the LXX Is. 65.11 the names of the heathen gods to whom the Israelites offer illicit sacrifices, Gad and Meni, are rendered as *daimonion* and *tyche*. On the *tyche* in Christian discourse especially, see A. Anwander, "Schicksal'-Wörter in Antike und Christentum" *ZRGG* 1 (1948) 316–22.

³⁷ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 9.2, 10.1.

³⁸ Clem. *Protrep.* 51.1, 102.4. Clement also uses *tyche* in the sense of fortune neutrally, and says that it is assigned by God; *Quis div. salv.* 26.3.

³⁹ Origen, *Con. Cels.* 8.65.

⁴⁰ Eusebius, *Const. ad coet. sanct.* (*Oration of Constantine to the Saints*) 6.

⁴¹ See G. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius* (Paris 1977) 67–70, 180–84, 191, 198, 204–6, 208–14, 219–22, 245–46; G. Chesnut, "Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, and the Later Patristic and Medieval Christian Historians" in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. H. Attridge and G. Hata (Leiden 1992) 706.

⁴² See Dohrn, *Die Tyche von Antiochia*; J. Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* (Ithaca 1970) 77–87; Chesnut (1977) 37–39, 41–50; K. Shelton, "Imperial Tyches" *Gesta* 18 (1979) 27–38; J. Ferguson, *Among the Gods: An Archaeological Exploration of Ancient Greek Religion* (London 1989) 166–68;

Greek religion, and as an influential power in the classics of the fifth century B.C. But it was in the time of the Diadochi, when the world must have seemed uncertain and self-determination impossible, that the *tyche* cult came into its own. Practically every city had an image and public worship of its personified civic identity, good fortune, and protective deity. Each civic *tyche* was also identified with a universal goddess, *Tyche* (the Roman *Fortuna*), 'Chance' or 'Luck,' who oversaw the seemingly random happenstances which determined the success or failure of the lives of great and small alike. This *Tyche* might often be viewed as a capricious and malevolent force, opposed or indifferent to goodness, justice, and individual happiness. She is regularly presented in this way in the novels and on epitaphs.⁴³ (It is perhaps appropriate that Bouttios, who as we shall see was influenced by the novels, also took a dim view of *tyche*.) *Tyche*, nevertheless, continued to be popular and persistent in late antiquity, as a willful and personified explanation of causation in life and literature, as an embodiment of civic pride, and as an object of cultic devotion. The temples of other gods might be torn down, but the *tychaion* often managed to remain standing. As such, the *tyche* cult was a significant competitor with Christianity.

In late antiquity the gods of the Olympian and Capitoline pantheon were worshipped largely as a matter of form, and it is doubtful whether they retained the devotion, enthusiasm, and belief of those who offered them public sacrifice. So when the Christian apologists rail against the gods of Homer and Hesiod, they have, in some measure, set up straw men against which to duel. *Tyche*, by contrast, was the object of sincere belief and earnest imprecations on the part of throngs of devotees. She was real and important to the audience of the apologists in a way that the traditional gods were not.⁴⁴ The usual apologetic attacks against paganism, moreover, which

R. Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, trans. A. Nevill (Oxford 1996) 25, 295; F. Becchi, "TYXH: Storia di un Nome" in *ΠΟΙΚΙΛΑΜΑ: Studi in onore di Michele R. Cataudella in occasione del 60° compleanno*, ed S. Bianchetti, et al. (La Spezia 2001) vol. 1, 111–27.

⁴³ Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire*, 80–82; T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley 1983) 11, 12, 13, 26, 49, 74, 86, 87, 89, 114, 119, 131, 174, 228. Interestingly, C. Bowra, "Palladas on Tyche" *CQ* n.s. 10 (1960) 118–28, discerns this to be the attitude of a jaded fourth-century poet as well.

⁴⁴ Certainly, for one individual in the fourth century Bowra, "Palladas on Tyche," 125, can say, "It is clear that she is much more real to him than are the Olympian gods, whose misfortunes in the riots of 391 raise no fundamental questions or regrets for him ..., and evoke no more than a smile.... She is a real figure in his depleted cosmology because she symbolizes the irrational and unjust

tended to concentrate on the 'scandal of myth' were not effective against the figure of the *tyche*. As a cult without a mythology to speak of, the *tyche* cult was impervious to attacks based on the immorality or imperfection of the god in question, or on the possibility that he might really be a man or a demon, from both the disgusted piety of philosophically-minded polytheist theologians and the tested Christian polemical arsenal. Bouttios overcame this particular obstacle by turning to the methods of fiction and his own fertile imagination, and creating an embarrassing mythology for the *tyche* cult where none had existed before, which traced the *tyche* back to all that his society considered barbaric and tyrannical.

But Bouttios had to be cautious in attacking the *tyche* cult, since the figure of the *tyche* had been absorbed into the rhetoric and iconography of Christian Roman Imperial propaganda. Despite the fact that Constantinople

scheme of thing in which men live." Nevertheless, I understand that mine is a more controversial contention that it might have been in the past. Nearly fifty years ago J. Toynbee, "Roma and Constantinopolis in Late Antique Art from 312 to 365" *JRS* 37 (1947) 135–36, already maintained that the situation was the reverse, that the reality of the traditional gods made their demise necessary, while the abstraction of personifications such as *tyche* made them innocuous: "The pantheon had to go because its denizens had possessed, for the great majority of pagans a real, objective, and independent existence," whereas the personifications of places, powers, or ideas received worship only derivatively as manifestations of abstract and immaterial entities, which might still be venerated as deriving their significance from God. W. Liebeschuetz, in a personal communication, set out his view of the matter: "The view that the worship of the Olympian gods had early in Roman history ceased to be real religion was once widely held (also by me) but is held no longer by scholars of Roman religion; see M. Beard, et al., *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge 1998). Even in Julian's revival actual worship and cult still centered on the Olympians, and it was worship of the Olympians that Augustine tried to demolish in his City of God. I also do not think that the relatively frequent mention of *Tyche/Fortuna* in Late Antiquity is evidence that Fortune was a widely worshipped divinity. It is rather due to the fact that Fortune could be looked at in two ways: either as a divinity or as impersonal luck. Seen simply as a personification of chance lady luck could be invoked by Christians (at least by most Christians). Fortunes of something or other, e.g., the emperor, or of Antioch, were similarly open to a double interpretation, that of patron spirit of an individual or city or what have you, or as an aspect of the thing itself. So even Christians might light candles in front of an image of the *Tyche* of Constantinople or Antioch without feeling that they committed idolatry." These are the opinions of scholars I respect, and I believe they deserve a hearing in any discussion of the *tyche* in late antiquity, even if I am not persuaded by them, and my impression of the situation remains different.

was deliberately founded as a Christian city,⁴⁵ Constantine did in fact raise an image of the civic *tyche* in his new capital,⁴⁶ and celebrated the city's dedication with an issue of coins and medallions representing Constantinople in the guise of her *tyche*, a winged woman, wearing a turreted crown, bearing a cornucopia, and resting her foot on a ship.⁴⁷ (It is, however, unclear what form the worship, if any, of this *tyche* took.) Indeed, *tyche* figures became more common in official Roman iconography in the fourth century than they had been in the past, and they remained on the Christian coinage of the time.⁴⁸ By the reign of Justinian (527–565) a law stipulated that the *tyche* of the emperor is exempt from the laws, since God subjected the laws to her, and sent her down to men as a living law.⁴⁹ And in the reign of Mauricius (582–602) the 'godly and heavenly *tyche*' of the emperor was part of the oath formula which made contracts binding⁵⁰—such was the change in Christian usage since Polycarp's martyrdom in Smyrna some five centuries before! So Bouttios had to pursue the precarious goal of at one and the same time denigrating the traditional *tyche* cults and sanctifying the *tyche* as it had been adopted by the system of Christian Empire. This involved presenting Constantine's inauguration of the *tyche* of Constantinople as a unique departure from the virgin sacrifices which had marked the founding of previous *tyches*.

⁴⁵ See Eusebius, *VC* 3.48.2; A. Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, trans. H. Mattingly (Oxford 1948) 110.

⁴⁶ *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* 34; *Patria Constantinopolis* 29 (*Scriptores originum Constantinopolitarum*, ed. T. Preger [Leipzig 1901] vol. 2, 166); see Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine*, 111; G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1974) esp. 43–45, 37, 40, 42, 307, 373–74 (cf. 26, 32 n. 252 n. 7, 315, 368); A. Cameron & J. Herrin, et al., *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: the Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden 1984) 208.

⁴⁷ A. Alföldi, "On the Foundation of Constantinople: A Few Notes" *JRS* 37 (1947) 16; Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine*, 111–12.

⁴⁸ Toynbee "Roma and Constantinopolis," 135–44; Shelton, "Imperial Tyches," 29, 32.

⁴⁹ Justinian, *Corpus Juris Civilis*, Nov. 105.2.4.

⁵⁰ R. Bagnall & K. Worp, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Leiden 2004) 52, 54.

Composition

The *tyche* sacrifices are patently fictitious.⁵¹ There is no reason to believe—indeed, there are very good reasons to disbelieve—that Alexander, Seleucus, Augustus, Tiberius, or Trajan conducted human sacrifices. The accounts of virgin sacrifice reflect reality only inasmuch as each of the cities supposed to have been founded with a *tyche* sacrifice can be shown to have had a civic *tyche* cult.⁵² But as fictions they are consistent with the popular literature and historiography of the fourth century: Dictys of Crete, Dares the Phrygian, the *Alexander Romance*, and the *Historia Augusta*. Momigliano's description of the last of these as "sensational and unscrupulous" and full of forged documents⁵³ might equally well be applied to the lot. And to insist that these works are really novels or romances is to miss the point that they represent the form in which many readers of late antiquity found it most congenial to receive information about the past.

Moreover, in the combination of verifiable fact (the cities in question did have *tyche* cults and statues) and preposterous explanation (the *tychai* originate with virgin sacrifice) the *tyche* sacrifice narratives have definite affinities with the perennially popular genre of 'conspiracy theory' literature, which is hard to classify as fiction or non-fiction. They air the suspicion that something sinister is afoot in the halls of power, about which the general populace is being kept in the dark, and offer startling revelations of the truth. Once again, Bouttios is not unique in this. Roman imperial historiography did not limit itself to the reporting of the public and official acts of the emperor, but also involved a certain amount of unsubstantiated rumour, retailing of court gossip, and tabloid speculation. Procopius' *Secret History* is only the most egregious example of a method to be found in Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and others.

As a writer of fictional history, Bouttios may have little to tell us about his subjects, but he has a great deal to tell us about the attitudes and ideas of

⁵¹ The notable exception to the general consensus that the *tyche* sacrifice narratives are fiction is Bosch, *Die kleinasiatischen Münzen*, Teil ii, Band I, 1 Hälfte, 258 n. 194, who suggests that these accounts occur so regularly in accounts of city foundation that they must be based on actual practice continued until the time of Seleucus I. But the regular occurrence of these human sacrifices is found in only one, late text, and is there supposed to continue after Seleucus.

⁵² See A. Moffatt, "A record of public buildings and monuments" in Jeffreys, *Studies in John Malalas*, 105–7.

⁵³ A. Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D." in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Oxford 1963) 96.

his own day. As he is writing fiction the careful construction of his *tyche* sacrifice narratives, both singly and as a whole, is all the more important in directing feeling and achieving persuasion. We shall now turn to the question of composition in detail.

Human sacrifice

Human sacrifice is perhaps a particularly appropriate subject for a 'fictional history'. The Greeks and Romans were simultaneously fascinated and horrified by the concept of human sacrifice, and they gave it generous treatment in their literature, but there is no unambiguous evidence that they ever actually practised human sacrifice.⁵⁴ As Albert Henrichs put it, "Stories of human sacrifice never tell us what the Greeks actually did; their relevance lies in telling us what the Greeks thought. Throughout antiquity, the reality of human sacrifice and its powerful hold on the imagination did not lie in its actual occurrence, but in the pretence—or even possibility—that it once occurred. ... Like few other acts of violence, human sacrifice blurs the boundaries between imagination and reality, between myth and history. Liminal by definition, human sacrifice provokes extreme and anxious reactions in most people. Outwardly disparaged, it is secretly relished and vicariously performed."⁵⁵ So, what do the *tyche* sacrifice stories tell us about the thought of one Greek (we presume), an Antiochene, a Christian, a subject of Rome in the last century of her secure hegemony over the Mediterranean, and how he expected his readers to think?

Bouttios' human sacrifices seem primarily intended to elicit the requisite sense of horror. We shall shortly indicate some passages from

⁵⁴ As my colleague Craig Williams pointed out, there is no unambiguous evidence that the Greeks *never* practised human sacrifice either, and since human sacrifice is manifestly 'part of the range of human cultural experience' the burden of proof must rest on those who would argue that human sacrifice never occurred in a given culture.

⁵⁵ A. Henrichs, "Demythologizing the Past, Mythicizing the Present: Myth, History, and the Supernatural at the Dawn of the Hellenistic Period" in *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, ed. R. Buxton (Oxford 1999) 228. Two recent scholarly works on the subject are D. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (London 1991), and Bonnechere, *Le sacrifice humain*. More popular treatments include N. Davies, *Human Sacrifice in History and Today* (New York 1991) and P. Tierney, *The Highest Altar: Unveiling the Mystery of Human Sacrifice* (New York 1989); the latter is often sensational and its treatment of wider issues somewhat shallow, but it does demonstrate that human sacrifice is still practiced in forms very similar to those found in antiquity.

ancient novels which demonstrate a similar effort to provoke horror in the reader, but some suggestion of why human sacrifice is so terrifying, especially compared to other forms of violent death, is perhaps appropriate here. Whereas murder, for instance, which can be frightening enough, is a socially illicit act intended to serve some other motive (greed, vengeance, or lust, for example), human sacrifice is, to some party, at least, socially acceptable, and in the context of human sacrifice the accomplishment of death is something of an end in itself. In a case of murder some motive overcomes basic human decency; human sacrifice denies and overturns human decency. The fatal movements of the ritual are inexorable, and death cannot be averted by appeals to reason, compassion, or even the threat of punishment. The rules of society are not frightfully broken or interrupted, they are horrifically reinvented.⁵⁶

But these are fairly general observations. The horror evoked by the *tyche* sacrifices must have a direction and a target. The reader's visceral response is meant to persuade him to accept an argument which might otherwise meet with some doubt and hesitation. Because human sacrifice was horrific, it belonged to the 'other' and the outsider. As generally understood by the Greeks and Romans, human sacrifice was practiced by barbarians on the remote periphery of the world,⁵⁷ and by their own ancestors in a barbarous, or semi-barbarous period of the remote past.⁵⁸ But

⁵⁶ It is in precisely this element, I suspect, that the real terror of the cult classic, *The Wicker Man* (British Lion Films, 1973), lies.

⁵⁷ See J. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill 1979) 245–48. See also Origen, *De princip.*, 2.9.5, *Con. Cels.* 5.27. As the Greeks and Romans became increasingly familiar with the lands of the Mediterranean, the people to whom they imputed human sacrifice became increasingly farther removed from the centre of Graeco-Roman civilization. For instance, the practice was associated with Ethiopia in late antiquity; see Heliodorus, *Aeth.*, 9.1, 10.7; Procopius, *Bell.*, 1.19.36; as well as an anonymous sixth-century sermon: C. Datema, "New Evidence for the Encounter between Constantinople and 'India'" in *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History*, ed. C. Laga, et al. (Leuven 1985) 56–65.

⁵⁸ The numerous Greek examples are as old as Homer, who has Achilles kill twelve Trojan princes on the pyre of Patroclus (*Il.* 18.333–37, 21.26–33, 23.19–23, 175–76, 240–42), and also include Iphigenia at Aulis (see Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*), Polyxena at the tomb of Achilles (see Euripides, *Troades*, *Hecuba*), Macaria before the battle against Eurystheus (see Euripides, *Heraclidae*), Athamas' planned sacrifice of Phrixos (who is replaced by the golden ram), and the daughter of Erechtheus and Praxithea (see W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. P. Bing [Berkeley 1983] 114 and n. 27, 148 and n. 58; Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 73–74). When the Greeks of the literate period heard the exceptional reports of their contemporary compatriots

it remained repugnant, even in these liminal settings, and so human sacrifice was the one item of the otherwise venerated *mos maiorum* which was extirpated by Roman law and Roman legions wherever it was encountered,⁵⁹ and some mythographers insisted that the gods of a civilized people would at no time accept a human sacrificial victim.⁶⁰ Within the civilized world human sacrifice was supposed to be performed by a different kind of outsider, enemies of the order of the state (especially the Roman state), conspirators such as Tarquin the Proud and Catiline,⁶¹ those enemies of the order of nature and the gods, the magicians,⁶² and the most egregiously tyrannical of emperors.⁶³ To ascribe, therefore, the practice of human sacrifice to the leaders of Greek and Roman polities, the men at the very centre of the civilized world, and especially in the recent past, is to suggest a radical inversion of the prejudices concerning civilization and barbarity, insider and outsider. It is to suggest that there is something

performing human sacrifice, they considered such incidents egregious aberrations, as in the stories of the priest Zoilus at Orchomenos and of the three Persian princes before the battle of Salamis; Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.* 38 (299E–F), *Themistocles*, 13.2–3; see Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 175; Henrichs, “Demythologizing the Past,” 229–35. The Romans believed that their custom of casting effigies into the Tiber on the Ides of May replaced an ancient rite, abolished by Hercules, in which actual men were thrown into the river: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 1.38.2–3; Ovid, *Fasti* 6.621–34; Varro, *Ling. Lat.*, 7.44; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 32 (272B–C). See also Porphyry, *De abstin.* 2.54–57; G. Huxley, “Fulgentius on the Cretan Hecatomphonia” *CPh* 68 (1973) 124–27.

⁵⁹ See Pomponius Mela, 3.18; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 30.(4).13; Suet., *Div. Claud.* 25.5; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 83 (283F–284C); Tertullian, *Apol.* 9.2–6; cf. Julius Caesar, *Bell. Gall.* 6.16; Tac., *Hist.* 4.54; Aug., *Civ. Dei* 7.26.

⁶⁰ The substitution of an animal for a human victim appears as early as the *Cypria* (Proclus, *Chr.* 104 [Allen]; see M. Davies, *The Greek Epic Cycle* [London 1989] 44), but most famously, Euripides in his *Iphigenia in Tauris* and perhaps *Iphigenia in Aulis* (though the latter may be the work of an interpolator) adapted the myth of Iphigenia at Aulis so that the girl was snatched away at the last minute to be the consecrated servant, rather than the sacrificial victim, of Artemis, and replaced by a deer. Plato, *Rep.*, 3.391B, insists that Homer’s report of Achilles offering live captives on the pyre of Patroclus must be considered a lie.

⁶¹ Sallust, *Cat.*, 22; Plutarch, *Publicola*, 4.1, *Cicero*, 10.3; Dio Cassius, 37.30.3.

⁶² Cicero, *In Vatinius*, (6)14; Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, 30.19–20; Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, 1.18; Cassius Dio, 69.11.2–3; Philostratus, *V.A.*, 8.5, 7.10, 12–15; Porphyry, *De abstin.*, 2.51; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 7.10.4; Paulus, *Sententiae*, 5.23.16; Libanius, *Decl.*, 41; *Clem. Rec.*, 2.13; *Clem. Hom.*, 2.26, 29, 30. See R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Oxford 1966) 95–127.

⁶³ Dio Cassius, 74.16.5 on Didius Julianus; *Hist. Aug., Elagabalus* 8.1–2.

barbarous and flawed about the revered pagan kings and emperors, and that the societies over which they presided were somehow outside of the civilization they were traditionally supposed to define. It is no doubt significant in this regard that the two emperors against whom the Roman Senate of the fourth century gauged their successors in its customary commendations, Augustus and Trajan,⁶⁴ appear in Bouttios as perpetrators of virgin sacrifice. This suggestion is an apt rejoinder to Porphyry's charge that Christianity itself represented "barbarian daring" (τὸ βάρβαρον τόλμημα).⁶⁵ If the great rulers indulged in human sacrifice, then the monarchy, and potentially the whole *oikoumene*, are erring and barbarous until they are redeemed by Constantine, who establishes a *tyche* without recourse to human sacrifice. Such ideas, we shall see, are consistent with the rhetoric of Constantine's reign.

There is a further indictment of the sacrificing rulers in a notable difference between the *tyche* sacrifices and many of the accounts of human sacrifice famous in antiquity. In some of the most memorable instances of human sacrifice in Greek myth (especially Iphigenia at Aulis), as well as in the Old Testament (Abraham offering Isaac, Jephthah's daughter, the king of Moab's son), the victim is a close relation of the ruler who performs the sacrifice.⁶⁶ The narration of these sacrifices consequently expresses the emotional conflict, the anguished resignation, and the immense grief of the sacrificer, to say nothing of his unquestionable commitment to the cause which calls for such a sacrifice.⁶⁷ These narratives also emphasize some external compulsion or necessity (the becalmed fleet, the demands of the divine, a thoughtless vow, an ominous siege) which makes the sacrifice all but unavoidable. In contrast, the victims of the *tyche* sacrifices are not royal princesses (Cepara, sacrificed by Zarbos at Anazarbos is described as a

⁶⁴ Eutropius, 8.5.3.

⁶⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 6.19.7.

⁶⁶ See N. Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. A. Forster (Cambridge, MA 1987) 37 and n. 18. The Biblical examples are taken from Gen. 22.1–19, Judg. 11.30–40, II Ki. 3.26–27. See W. Sypherd, *Jephthah and his Daughter: A Study in Comparative Literature* (Newark 1948) for a survey of the literary, musical, and other artistic treatments of at least one of these stories from the middle ages to the twentieth century.

⁶⁷ The recognition of the grief of Agamemnon, for one, is strikingly seen in Pliny's description, *Nat. hist.* 35.36 (73), of a painting of the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Timanthes, in which the artist, having exhausted every evocation of grief, depicted Agamemnon veiled; see S. Woodford, *The Trojan War in Ancient Art* (Ithaca 1993) 37.

'country girl,' and Calliope, sacrificed by Trajan, is a girl from Antioch⁶⁸), and there is no suggestion of any emotional involvement whatsoever on the part of the sacrificers. The *tyche* sacrifices, moreover, seem to be more profitable than necessary. These cool, detached killings of hapless subjects, compared with the stories of a sorrowful king slaying his nearest and dearest, would inevitably stress the tyranny and abuse of power on the part of the practitioners of human sacrifice.

The charge of human sacrifice is of particular interest coming from the pen of a Christian author. The simultaneous fascination and revulsion which human sacrifice elicited were, if anything, more powerful in the imagination of the Christian than of his polytheist neighbour. While the practice of human sacrifice was anathema to the Hebrew scriptures and the Christians who inherited them, the idea of human sacrifice was central to the Christian doctrine of redemption and salvation, as well as to the rhetoric of the Christian life.⁶⁹ Human sacrifice may have, for this reason, been an attractive topic for a Christian author, but the Christian attitude to human sacrifice was unambiguous. Eusebius and Athanasius, among others, characterized the practice as one of the gross errors of profane religion which led to the proliferation of bloodshed.⁷⁰

The Christians, moreover, were not unfamiliar with the accusation of human sacrifice. They had been the victims of such slander, especially in the second century, when they had been accused of infant sacrifice, ritual murder, cannibalism, and other outrageous crimes.⁷¹ The slander was not so objectionable to them that they hesitated to turn it against their accusers. Human sacrifice, suggested the Christian apologists, was an inevitable and widespread trait of paganism, and they could trot out a number of examples from Graeco-Roman literary culture to prove the point.⁷² The charge of human sacrifice was also specifically directed against the persecuting

⁶⁸ Malalas, 10.53, 11.9.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Rom. 12.1, 1 Cor. 5.7, Eph. 5.2, Heb. 10.10; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.2.

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *L.C.* 13.6–8; Athanasius, *Adversus Gentes* 1.25 (*Contra Gentes* 25).

⁷¹ See A. Henrichs, "Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians: A Reconsideration" in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. P. Granfield & J. Jungmann (Münster 1970) vol. 1, 18–35; F. Dölger, "'Sacramentum infanticidii': Die Schlachtung eines Kindes und der Genuss seines Fleisches und Blutes als vermeintlicher Einweihungsakt im ältesten Christentum" *Antike und Christentum* 4 (1934) 188–228.

⁷² See Clement Alex., *Protrep.* 3.42; Eusebius, *L.C.* 13.6–8; Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.70; Davies, *Human Sacrifice*, 115–30.

emperors. Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria (bishop 248–c.264), according to Eusebius, reports that under the influence of Egyptian magicians the emperor Valerian turned against the Christians and indulged in gruesome child sacrifice in order to win divine favour.⁷³ Maxentius, the rival of Constantine, was supposed to have sacrificed pregnant women and babies for magical purposes.⁷⁴ Bouttios' sweeping accusation of human sacrifice against famous and revered pagan rulers is consistent with this polemic. Nor was this the last time when Christians would tar others with the same brush that had been used against them. Much later, in the Middle Ages, arose the rumour that the Jews required the blood of a Christian victim for their rituals, and this slander has not yet been completely quelled.⁷⁵

Human sacrifice in the *tyche* narratives, then, is a device used to evoke a horror which can be molded into indignation and outrage against Bouttios' chosen subjects, or targets: pagan rulers, ancient and modern. When accused of human sacrifice these kings and emperors are no longer seen as the protectors and arbiters of civilization, but as barbarous powers who stand at the heart of society and cast doubt on its claims to civilization.⁷⁶ The chosen victims of these rulers show them to be tyrants, since, unlike the heroes of Greek myth and the Old Testament, they are not killing their own daughters at grave personal expense, but the daughters of strangers. And in accusing the emperors of human sacrifice, the Christians were turning a calumny which had been fixed on themselves against their persecutors.

⁷³ Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.10.4.

⁷⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.* 8.14.5, *L.C.* 1.36.1.

⁷⁵ The slanderous accusation that the Jews practised human sacrifice did appear in antiquity (see Josephus, *Contra Apion*, 2.8 [91–96]), but it came to fruition in the Middle Ages beginning in the twelfth century; see H. Strack, *The Jew and Human Sacrifice*, trans. Henry Blanchamp (New York 1909); J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (New Haven 1943; repr. Philadelphia 1993) 124–39. On the persistence and spread of this libel, see C. Roth, *The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew: The Report by Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli (Pope Clement XIV)* (London 1935); R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven 1988); R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven 1992); J. Fraenkel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge 1997); S. Friedman, *The Incident at Massena: The Blood Libel in America* (New York 1978).

⁷⁶ Many modern horror stories, particularly some of the works of M.R. James and H. P. Lovecraft, depend for the intensity of their feeling on a similar irruption of a terrible practice or power into an otherwise familiar or domestic setting.

Virgin sacrifice

The victims of the *tyche* sacrifices are maidens not merely because *tyche* is a feminine word grammatically and the concept is personified as a woman iconographically. *Virgo* was one of the titles of the goddess *Fortuna*, the Roman equivalent of *Tyche*.⁷⁷ Popular wisdom, exemplified in the novels, held that the proper victim of human sacrifice is a virgin (just as the correct animal should be ‘undefiled’ and never have been ‘brought under the yoke’). In Achilles Tatius’ novel Leucippe is selected as a sacrificial victim because of her virginity, and Heliodorus describes the elaborate test of virginity to which the Ethiopians subject their sacrificial victims.⁷⁸ Moreover, the subject of virgin sacrifice is, like human sacrifice, a means of manipulating the sentiments of the reader, and of indicating the tyranny of the sacrificer.

It is perhaps worth noting that in the Greek and Roman imagination the victims of human sacrifice were not exclusively female. From the earliest literary instances in the *Iliad* to charges against magicians under the Empire there were numerous examples of males as the victims of ritual killing, quite possibly equalling female victims in distribution.⁷⁹ Of course, the victims of the *tyche* sacrifices are all female because they are supposed to be depicted in the statues of various civic *tychai*, which are consistently female. But there is also a certain romantic — potentially pornographic — appeal in a female sacrificial victim, or a woman in danger, at any rate.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 74 (281D), *Fort. Rom.* 10 (322F–323A) reports *Fortuna Virgo* as παρθένος Τύχη, and παρθένος is used of a number of the victims of *tyche* sacrifice. On *Fortuna Virgo*, see J. Champeaux, *Fortuna: recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome et dans le monde romain des origines à la mort de César* (Roma 1982–87) vol. 1, 268–74. On the distinction between the Roman *Fortuna* and the Greek *Tyche*, see K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (München 1960) 176–83.

⁷⁸ Achilles Tatius, 3.12; Heliodorus, *Aeth.*, 9.1.25, 10.7–9.

⁷⁹ Examples of male sacrificial victims, or prospective victims, include Heracles at the altar of Busiris, Orestes and Pylades in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the twelve Trojan youths in the *Iliad*, the Lydian youths in the story of Croesus (Herodotus, 1.86.2), the three Persian princes in Plutarch’s account of Themistocles, and Theagenes in the final book of Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica*. There are also examples from other cultures of which the Greeks and Romans would have been aware: Isaac, the king of Moab’s son, and the infant sons of the Carthaginian nobility. Boys or youthful males seem to predominate as the victims of sacrifices for magical purposes.

⁸⁰ The appeal of a ‘damsel in distress’ in some horrific situation hardly requires explanation, it remains constant to the present day. As R. Florescu, *In Search of*

Kilmer's analysis of the Kleophrades Painter's depiction of the rape of Cassandra, in which the victim is likewise a virgin, the sexual aspect of the situation is obvious, her vulnerability is accentuated, and her role as a prophetess and the setting at the cult statue of Athena (a virgin goddess) imply a perversion of religious ritual — despite the gulf of time — suggests that even if the *tyche* sacrifices are supposed to be sexually exciting, in the context of Graeco-Roman society, they are intended to elicit not sadistic lust, but eroticized sympathy for the victim as a beautiful woman.⁸¹ Evidence for the preponderance of the appeal of virgin sacrificial victims

Frankenstein (Boston 1975) 195, comments on the Hammer horror films: "almost all of the horror films turned out by Hammer Films tended to exploit the physical attributes of their leading ladies. Somehow it seemed a more heinous crime if the victims of the monster turned out to have amply proportioned and generously exposed bosoms. It was gratuitous, to be sure, but it added enormously to the popularity of the films." Scantly clad heroines facing hair-raising dangers were ubiquitous on the covers and in the pages of the immensely popular pulp magazines; see P. Haining, *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines* (Chicago 2000). It is also possible that the sacrifice of Polyxena is eroticized by the exposure of her breasts (Euripides, *Hecuba* 557–65), but it might also suggest her *andreia*, as she exposes the region in which a mortal blow would be dealt to a warrior; see Loraux, *Tragic Ways*, 57–61. The male victims of human sacrifice might have held the same appeal to the more catholic sexual appetites of certain circles in the Graeco-Roman world. In one of the fragments of Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* (Extract 2) a character opines that fear and bonds make a prisoner, a male slave, more attractive, and C. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford 1999) 104–7, notes that little distinction was made between women and freeborn young men as victims of rape in wartime.

⁸¹ 'Rape of Cassandra' by the Kleophrades Painter = Kilmer, R321; Naples 2422. See M. Kilmer, "Sexual Violence: Archaic Athens and the Recent Past" in *'Owls to Athens': Essays on Classical Subjects Presented to Sir Kenneth Dover*, ed. E. Craik (Oxford 1990) 273–75; M. Kilmer, *Greek Erotica on Red-Figure Vases* (London: Duckworth, 1993) 157–59. Closer to the fourth century spells of erotic magic prescribe that a model of the object of the magician's amorous attentions should be made as a bound figurine in clay, menaced with a sword by a figurine of Ares, and pierced with a number of bronze needles, but the manipulation of circumstances depicted as restraint and violence in these apparently sadistic ritual images is supposed to be realized as acquiescence, not force or compulsion; see F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. F. Philip (Cambridge, MA 1997) 136–44. By analogy with modern slasher films, it is possible that the endangered female might elicit more than sympathy; C. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton 1992) explores "the possibility that male viewers are quite prepared to identify not just with screen females, but with screen females in the horror-film world, screen females in fear and pain" (5).

might also be found in the insistence of the modern Western imagination on conceiving of the victim of human sacrifice in tropical climes as a female virgin, whereas in actual practice Polynesian taboo demanded that the victim of human sacrifice be exclusively male, and considered his virginity indifferent.⁸² We shall explore the significance and function of this romantic element at greater length below.

The immense dramatic potential of virgin sacrifice was by no means lost on the tragedians of Athens.⁸³ The sacrifice of Iphigenia was the most prominent, but not the only virgin sacrifice dealt with on the tragic stage. A distinction may be made in these treatments. As described by Aeschylus, the death of Iphigenia under compulsion and constraint (she is 'seized, hoisted, and gagged' over the altar) is like a murder, which ought to bring shame on those responsible for it, namely her father and the other kings. Euripides' sacrificial heroines, in contrast, go willingly to their deaths, with an acquiescence appropriate to a sacrificial victim, and consequently achieve a noble death and win 'glory'. The glory of the female victim easily supersedes that of her noble, male sacrificers.⁸⁴ In the tragic virgin

⁸² For popular and influential examples of the western conception, see such films as 'King Kong' (RKO, 1933; remake Paramount, 1976), 'She Gods of Shark Reef' (American International, 1958). The seldom observed fact that women are not offered in sacrifice by the Polynesians is noted by R. Daggett in his introduction to H.M. King Kalakaua, *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii: The Fables and Folk-Lore of a Strange People* (New York 1888; repr. Honolulu 1990) 46, and by N. Emerson in the notes to his translation of D. Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities (Mooolelo Hawaii)* (Honolulu 1951; 1st pub. 1903) 183 n.34. The western public imposed ideas of their own on a culture which practised human sacrifice, and was not misinformed by their earliest observers of Polynesia. In their numerous mentions of human sacrifice as it was practiced in Tahiti and Hawaii, Cook's journals never refer to a female victim, in fact, they note in one instance that women were excluded from the ceremony of human sacrifice altogether; see *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, ed. J.C. Beaglehole (Cambridge 1955-74) vol. 3 (*The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*, 1967) 200, cf. 198-206, 978-84. On Hawaiian sacrifice generally, see V. Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago 1985). The popular 'appeal' to the western imagination of the device of virgin sacrifice, to the moon, no less, and described in nuptial terms (see below), is also evident in the fact that it recurs in the popular stories of Robert E. Howard; see *The Savage Tales of Solomon Kane*, ed. R. Burke (New York 1998) 'The Moon of Skulls' (originally published in *Weird Tales*, June and July 1930) 129-30, 151-52, 'The Hawk of Basti' 261.

⁸³ See Loraux, *Tragic Ways*, 31-48.

⁸⁴ See Loraux, *Tragic Ways*, 42-48.

sacrifices of both Aeschylus and Euripides, however, our sympathies are supposed to rest with the victim, and her sacrificer is supposed to be vilified. Just so, in the *tyche* sacrifices our sympathies belong with the virgin girls, and our feelings are directed against the rulers who sacrifice them.

The ritual killing of virgins by vicious rulers was not, however, relegated to the mythical past. Domitian buried alive a reputedly defiled Vestal Virgin (possibly in AD 92).⁸⁵ Pliny protests her innocence, but even if there was some truth to the case, her guilt must have paled beside Domitian's own vices. In 213 Caracalla himself corrupted one of the Vestal Virgins, and then proceeded to bury her alive, along with two of her colleagues.⁸⁶ These monstrous acts were committed by notoriously despotic emperors, but by Roman emperors of the none too distant past, nevertheless. They must have both inspired and lent weight to the charges Bouttios apparently leveled against all pagan rulers, irrespective of their reputation for good or bad. These stories should also remind us of the deep sense of outrage with which Graeco-Roman society reacted to the violation of respectable women, particularly of virgins, and especially by abusive rulers.⁸⁷ Rape or murder made heroines of the victims, and tyrants of the perpetrators, from the son of Tarquin and Appius Claudius to the rivals of Constantine.⁸⁸

Virginité was an important subject of Christian discourse when Bouttios wrote, and this can hardly have failed to have some impact on how the virgin victims of the *tyche* sacrifices were viewed. As Averil Cameron has said, the general theme of virginité "as a subject of treatises and exhortations achieved its greatest success precisely in the fourth century, especially in the second half, when scarcely any major Christian figure

⁸⁵ Pliny, *Epist.*, 4.11; Suet., *Domit.* 8.3–4; Cassius Dio, 60.3.4(3²). On the execution of Vestal Virgins see J. Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (New York 1962) 238–42.

⁸⁶ Cassius Dio, 78.16.1–3.

⁸⁷ An exclusive reading in the myths of Ovid and Nonnus, in which rape is often as playful as it is frequent, might anaesthetize us to the regularly disturbed reaction of the ancients to rape.

⁸⁸ On the rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius, see Livy, 1.57–60; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 4.64–85. On the attempted rape of Verginia by Appius Claudius, see Livy, 3.44–658; Diodorus Siculus, 12.24; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 12.28–49. On the seductions and adulteries of Maxentius, see Eusebius, *H.E.* 8.14.2, 17, *V.C.* 1.33–34, and of Maximin, see *H.E.* 8.14.14–16; cf. *L.C.* 7.7.

neglected to write about it.”⁸⁹ In addition to the “treatises and exhortations,” as Cameron herself makes clear, virginity was also a central topic in many of the apocryphal *Acts* of the Apostles, composed in the second and third centuries. In the apocryphal *Acts* we often find that a new female convert must maintain her continence in opposition to powerful members of the Roman government and the civic elite.⁹⁰ In the *Acts of Andrew*, after her healing and conversion Maximilla denies intercourse to her husband, Aegeastes, the proconsul at Patras.⁹¹ Even more strikingly, Thecla, according to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, perseveres in her virginity, despite proposals from eligible men prominent in the city and the importuning and threats of Roman governors in favour of a marriage. As a result of her refusal Thecla is sentenced—not once, but twice—to death, and is only saved by miraculous means.⁹² (Thecla, it is noteworthy, was also mentioned in Gregory of Nazianzus’ sermons against Julian, further suggesting some affinity with the *tyche* sacrifices, which were, we shall suggest, also directed against Julian.⁹³)

On Kate Cooper’s reading, these confrontations serve to dramatize an ethical conflict between the celebration of sexuality which ensured the continuity of the city in its families and institutions on the one hand, and the renunciation of sexuality as part of a challenge to the established social order on the other. A more superficial, but no less compelling, reading suggests that the *Acts* pursue the same topic as the *tyche* sacrifice narratives: an opposition between rulers and virgins, in which the virgins are the imperiled heroines. The close connection between Christian virgin martyrs and the *tyche* sacrifices seems almost explicit in that Trajan’s *tyche* sacrifice at Antioch is followed almost immediately by an account of the execution

⁸⁹ A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley 1991) 171. For discussions of the early Christian discourse on virginity, see A. Cameron, “Virginity as Metaphor: women and the rhetoric of early Christianity” in *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History*, ed. A. Cameron (Chapel Hill 1989) 181–205; Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 171–88; K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA 1996).

⁹⁰ See Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 45–67. Cf. M. Aubin, “Reversing Romance? The Acts of Thecla and the Ancient Novel” in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. R. Hock, et al. (Atlanta 1998) 257–72.

⁹¹ *Passion of Andrew* 14, 16, 17, 23, 36–37, 46; see D. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* (Atlanta 1990).

⁹² *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 20–21, 27.

⁹³ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.69.

of five Christian women for their faith, and the mention of the martyrdom of St. Drosine and other virgins.⁹⁴ We do not need to suggest that Bouttios is participating in a subversive or anti-authoritarian discourse (the praise of virginity had, after all, become the authoritative social norm by his time), only that he referred to the popular *Acts* in characterizing pagan rulers as the villains of his piece.

The imagination of antiquity expected the victims of human sacrifice to be virgins, but Bouttios uses this expectation, as well as the necessity that they should be female, to expand the referential field of his *tyche* sacrifice narratives. The virgin victims allude to the sacrificial heroines of tragedy, the Vestal victims of the despotism of Domitian and Caracalla, and the virgin martyrs of the apocryphal *Acts*, as well as exploiting the appealing image of a female sacrificial victim. All of this makes the victim the object of our sympathies, and makes the ruler who sacrifices her out to be not a legitimate ruler at all, but a tyrant.

Foundation sacrifices

Associated as they are with new cities and new buildings, the *tyche* sacrifices also serve as foundation sacrifices. There is widespread anthropological evidence for sacrifices, even of humans and virgins in particular, being offered in conjunction with laying a foundation stone or inaugurating a new construction,⁹⁵ but no indisputable evidence for human foundation sacrifices in Greece itself. The young woman found buried, along with a man and four horses, in the tenth-century 'Heroon' at Lefkandi on Euboia might be construed as a foundation sacrifice (the pit in which she was interred is close to a central supporting post), but it is equally possible that she was offered as a burial sacrifice for her male companion or that she

⁹⁴ Malalas, 11.10.

⁹⁵ See P. Sartori, "Über das Bauopfer" *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 30 (1898) 1–54; Davies (1981) 21–22, 43, 277–78; Burkert, *Homo Necans* 39 and n.17; Tierney, *The Highest Altar* 21 and n. 18, 201, 372. I was surprised to find that when I related the topic of my research to a neighbour from Guinea-Bissau, he was able to tell me about an event that occurred during a war between the Fulani and the Mandinka in his country. The Fulani king set about building a fortress at Kansala, and sacrificed and buried four virgins (in a standing position) in the four corners of the fortification. These foundation sacrifices were performed about 1900, or near the beginning of the Colonial period, and the report of these events was offered to my neighbour by the grandson of the Fulani king.

was buried separately after a natural death.⁹⁶ Human foundation sacrifice was practised at a very early period in the Near East, but was largely replaced by the offering of substitute figures.⁹⁷ The Greeks did adopt, at a much later time, the Near Eastern custom of depositing valuables as a foundation sacrifice.⁹⁸ The Greeks also made animal sacrifices at the founding of buildings, especially temples, well into the historical period.⁹⁹ Animal sacrifices are also associated with the inauguration of new cities in legend and history.¹⁰⁰

The possibility of a memory of practice in the remote past or extrapolation from the well-attested practice of animal sacrifice is hardly necessary to explain the idea of human foundation sacrifice in the *tyche* narratives. The folk belief that it was necessary to somehow secure a human life within a new construction in order to ensure its durability persisted in Greece and the Balkans at least until the end of the nineteenth century. In addition to applying the blood of a sacrificed animal to the corner stone, in nineteenth-century Greece builders would try to set the foundation stone over a man's shadow, or measure a man's shadow or his person and bury the measure under the foundation stone. In Bulgaria and Romania builders measured a man's shadow with a string and built the string into the wall of a new edifice. Certain people made a profession of supplying builders with such strings. Wherever these practices were known, the person whose shadow was thus manipulated was expected to die within a set period of time. His shadow represented his soul, and his life and vigour were transferred to the new building.¹⁰¹ The same idea is found in the folklore motif of "the walled-up wife," pervasive throughout Greece and the

⁹⁶ See M. Popham, et al. "The Hero of Lefkandi" *Antiquity* 56 (1982) 169–74; Hughes, *Human Sacrifice* 46–47; Henrichs, "Demythologizing the Past" 228.

⁹⁷ H. Müller-Karpe, *Handbuch der Vorgeschichte* (München 1968) vol. 2 (Jungsteinzeit) 336, 351, 361.

⁹⁸ W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, trans. M. Pinder & W. Burkert (Cambridge, MA 1992) 53–55.

⁹⁹ M. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (München 1955) vol. 1, 404 and n. 10; Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution* 54–55.

¹⁰⁰ Aeneas was supposed to have sacrificed a sow and her litter to Juno at the future site of Alba Longa (Verg. *Aen.* 8.42–85), and Cadmus sacrificed a cow at the site of Thebes (Nonn. *Dion.* 4.305–6, 311–55, 5.1–34). Arrian indicates that Alexander made sacrifices at the foundations of Alexandria ad Aegyptum and Alexandria Eschate; *Anab.* 3.1.5, 4.4.1.

¹⁰¹ J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: MacMillan, 1911; 3rd edition) vol. 3, 89–91.

Balkans.¹⁰² In the folk tales which contain this motif a master builder must wall up his wife in the bridge, monastery, or fortress he is building in order to secure its stability. This folk belief seems to contain the best explanation of why Bouttios should suggest, and perhaps expect his readers to believe, that the initiation of a *tyche* image and cult, which was supposed to personify the city and ensure its prosperity and perpetuation (as the man whose shadow had been stolen or the immured wife was to do for the new construction), in almost every case necessitated a human sacrifice. I assume here that this folk practice preserves ritual and belief from a period when foundation sacrifices were actually performed by the Greeks (although with an animal substituted for a human victim). But it is also possible, of course, that this folk practice arose from fictions of human sacrifice such as those of Bouttios.

The *tyche* sacrifices as foundation sacrifices may also have been a means of denigrating the building projects of pagan emperors. Some treatment of the subject's building activity is a standard part of the *basilikos logos*, the formal, rhetorical encomium of a ruler.¹⁰³ The building projects of Constantine, almost entirely churches, are lavishly praised by Eusebius in this style.¹⁰⁴ Julian's Christian detractors were quick to point out that on this same count his efforts were a dismal failure. An earthquake wrecked the martyrion he tried to build.¹⁰⁵ Bouttios, as we shall see, makes much of the contrast between Constantine and Julian. But the building program of Constantine, particularly as it was praised by Eusebius, might itself be open to criticism since the churches he built accommodated only a special group of citizens, and not the general public.¹⁰⁶ Bouttios nullifies the achievement of pagan emperors by suggesting that their building projects, no matter how broad their appeal, are contaminated by human sacrifice. It is not irrelevant in this regard that Tiberius sacrificed a girl in connection with his construction of a theatre in Antioch, which was completed by Trajan, who also carried out a *tyche* sacrifice in Antioch.¹⁰⁷ The theatre, a frequent target

¹⁰² See A. Dundes, ed., *The Walled-Up Wife: a Casebook* (Madison 1996).

¹⁰³ See A. Cameron and S. Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine: translation, introduction, and commentary* (Oxford 1999) 31–32.

¹⁰⁴ Euseb., *L.C.* 9.14–17, *V.C.* 2.45.2–46, 3.1.4, 25–43.4, 47.4–53.4, 4.58–60.

¹⁰⁵ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.24–26.

¹⁰⁶ Jul. *Misop.* 346C, professed to feel the pressure to celebrate those festivals which might be enjoyed by all citizens, not only particularly religious polytheists.

¹⁰⁷ Malalas, 10.10, 11.9.

of the criticism of churchmen,¹⁰⁸ was doubly damnable as an imperial building project if it was also founded on human blood.

Modern fiction also indicates that the idea of human foundation sacrifice would have contributed to the underlying sense of horror which Bouttios sought to achieve.¹⁰⁹

Human sacrifice and the *tyche* cult

It remains to be seen why sacrifices of the type we have described should be connected with the *tyche* cult. Our answers at present are only speculative, but they might help us toward an explanation of Bouttios' narratives. In the first place, it is possible that the fourth-century imagination associated the *tyche* with the moon, and moon worship, in turn, with virgin sacrifice. Sallustius, a member of Julian's circle and writing in his reign, says that the power of fortune (*tyche*) resides in the moon, or, perhaps, extends as far as the moon.¹¹⁰ Macrobius straightforwardly equates *Tyche* (he uses the Greek term, rather than the Latin *Fortuna*) with the moon.¹¹¹ In Heliiodorus' novel, the Ethiopians intend to sacrifice the virgin Charicleia to the moon.¹¹² According to the rumour reported by Theodoret, Julian sacrificed a woman in a temple at Carrhae,¹¹³ and Carrhae was famous for its temple of the Moon.¹¹⁴ This association of the *tyche* cult with the moon, and of moon

¹⁰⁸ See Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*; Novatian, *De Spectaculis*; John Chrysostom, *Contra ludos et theatra* (PG 56, 263–70); H. Jürgens, *Pompa diaboli: Die lateinischen Kirchenväter und das antike Theater* (Stuttgart 1972); C. Schnusenberg, *The Relationship between the Church and the Theatre: Exemplified by Selected Writings of the Church Fathers and by Liturgical Texts until Amalarius of Metz, 75–852 A.D.* (Lanham 1988) 1–53. Bloodshed and death were not, in actuality, altogether foreign to the theatre; Martial, *Spect.* 9 (7), remarks on an actual execution which took place in the context of a mime.

¹⁰⁹ The basic premise of Peter Ackroyd's novel, *Hawksmoor* (London 1985), is that each of the Restoration architect's London churches was founded with a human sacrifice.

¹¹⁰ Sallustius, 9: ἐν σελήνῃ δὲ τὴν δύναμιν ἔχει, ἐπειδὴ ὑπὲρ σελήνην οὐδὲ ἐν ἐκ τύχης ἂν γένοιτο; see A. Nock, *Sallustius, Concerning the Gods and the Universe* (London 1926) lxxv, 20–21.

¹¹¹ Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.19.17: Δαίμονα Τύχην Ἔρωτα Ἀνάγκην, *et duo priores solem ac lunam intellegi volunt, ... luna Τύχη, quia corporum praesul est quae fortuitorum varietate iactantur.*

¹¹² Heliiodorus, *Aeth.* 10.4, cf. 6.

¹¹³ Theodoret, *H.E.* 3.21.

¹¹⁴ Herodian, 4.13.3, says that the temple of the Moon goddess at Carrhae was the principal cult centre of that region, and the fame of the temple can only have

worship with virgin sacrifice can only have been an initial inspiration for the *tyche* sacrifice narratives, because, of course, Bouttios' virgins are not sacrificed *to* the *tyche*, rather by being sacrificed they become *tychai*.

In the Andes, from Incan until modern times, human sacrifices have been made in order procure luck or good fortune (what the Greeks might have called *tyche*) for the person who performs or patronizes the sacrifice.¹¹⁵ The sacrificial victim becomes a divinity in this process, and himself bestows the luck on his sacrificers and other devotees in perpetuity.¹¹⁶ In certain instances there is an insistence that the victim must be a young woman, since she is supposed to be married to the god or spirit to whom she is offered.¹¹⁷ Grisly reports of a similar nature from India indicate that such beliefs and practices are not necessarily isolated to South America.¹¹⁸

It is a long way from the Andes to Antioch, but the parallels we find are instructive, and many of the details of South American ritual would hardly have been foreign to the ancient Mediterranean. It is clear that Bouttios envisages the *tyche* sacrifices as situations remarkably similar to the Andean sacrifices: the virgin is sacrificed in order to produce good luck, indeed, *the* good luck of the city personified, and the victim is deified, with the full apparatus of cult including a cult statue and sacrifices. Bouttios also presents the *tyche* sacrifice as, in a way, a marriage. Trajan celebrates a bridal procession for Calliope as part of her *tyche* sacrifice.¹¹⁹ The understanding of virgin sacrifice as a kind of 'marriage to death' or defloration (we have already noted the affinities between rape and the *tyche*

increased when Caracalla was assassinated on his way to sacrifice there (Herodian, 4.13.3–8). *Hist. Aug., Carac.* 6.6, 7.1, notes that Caracalla was assassinated on his way from Edessa to Carrhae to worship the moon god, and includes some arcana on the moon cult. Cf. Libanius, *Or.* 30.7, 8. See T. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious traditions of Harran* (Leiden 1992) 27.

¹¹⁵ Tierney, *The Highest Altar* 333, 336, 361–63.

¹¹⁶ Tierney, *The Highest Altar* 33–41, 320.

¹¹⁷ Tierney, *The Highest Altar* 346–51, 358.

¹¹⁸ A. Atapur, "Killing for 'Mother' Kali" *Time Asia*, Jul. 22, 2002.

¹¹⁹ Malalas, 11.9. Calliope's bridal procession may have been supposed to be somewhat analogous to the Boeotian Daedala ceremony in which the Daedala, a wooden image dressed as a bride, was led in a ceremony imitating the marriage rites to an altar, sacrifices were performed, and then everything, image, altar, and sacrificial animals, were destroyed by fire; see W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Oxford 1985) 135.

sacrifices) was by no means uncommon in antiquity.¹²⁰ The *tyche* sacrifice as marriage, moreover, might be intended to explain a potential iconographic anomaly: the girls are sacrificed as virgins to become *tychai*, but, as Bouttios and his readers would have been very well aware, the civic *tyche* was depicted as a matron, rather than as a maiden. This makes perfect sense, however, if the sacrifice is also something of a marriage ceremony, and the virgin becomes a matron (a possessor and dispenser of goods, the lady of a — civic — household) and as such fulfills her role as *tyche*.

No exact parallel to the *tyche* sacrifices and their rationale is obvious in the Graeco-Roman world, but the case of Antinous is close. According to Cassius Dio, the truth concerning the death of Hadrian's 'beloved' in 130 was that the youth had been offered as a sacrifice to satisfy Hadrian's appetite for magic spells and divination. As a result, Hadrian built a city named after him at the place where he died and established a cult in his honour, with his sacred images gracing nearly the whole world.¹²¹ The points of comparison are evident: a youth is sacrificed by a ruler; the victim becomes divine, or at least an object of worship, after death; if not married in death, he does become conjoined with Hadrian's godhead through his sacrifice; and his sacrifice is associated with a city foundation (like many of the cities founded with *tyche* sacrifices, Antinoopolis was established on the site of a previous village). There was also some association of the *tyche* and Antinous inasmuch as a *tyche* figure was represented on the reverse of some coins depicting Antinous on the obverse.¹²² The example of Antinous would have suited the polemic of Bouttios, since Christian authors especially considered Hadrian's relationship with the youth and his public

¹²⁰ See Loraux, *Tragic Ways* 37–42; D. Fowler, "Virgil on Killing Virgins" in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. M. Whitby, et al. (Bristol 1987) 185–98; R. Rehm, *Marriage to Death: The Conflation of Wedding and Funeral Rituals in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton 1994).

¹²¹ Cassius Dio, 69.11.2–4; cf. *Hist. Aug., Hadrian* 14.5–6. On the death and deification of Antinous, see R. Lambert, *Beloved and God: The Story of Hadrian and Antinous* (New York 1984) esp. 128–54, 177–97; M. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (Princeton 1987) 239–60. On the foundation of Antinoopolis, see H. Bell, "Antinoopolis: A Hadrianic Foundation in Egypt" *JRS* 30 (1940) 133–47; Lambert, *Beloved and God* 198–208; M. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (Princeton 2000) 190–96.

¹²² Specifically the coins of Philadelphia in Mysia; see G. Blum, "Numismatique d'Antinoos" *Journal international d'archéologie numismatique* 16 (1914) 49, planche 3, 14.

and unmeasured grief for him one of the most disreputable deeds of any emperor.¹²³

Overall composition

We have suggested above that Bouttios' making villains of the perpetrators of human sacrifice and direction of the readers' sympathies toward the victim lend a romantic aspect to the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice. Virgin sacrifice, however, properly belongs to romance inasmuch as, at the climax of the narrative, the actual sacrifice of the heroine is averted in the nick of time by the arrival of the hero. But in each instance of the *tyche* sacrifice there is no rescue, and the emphasis seems to be on the grisly rite and not the maiden's vulnerability. This might seem to suggest that the *tyche* sacrifices are intended merely as an attack on the origins of the *tyche* cult, appealing to the ancient appreciation for the macabre,¹²⁴ and that they cannot properly be described as 'romantic'. Unless, that is, Constantine's 'bloodless sacrifice' and the new *tyche* of Constantinople are seen to constitute the climax of Bouttios' history of *tyche* sacrifices. The previous *tyche* sacrifices allow the audience to realize the peril facing the heroine at the climax because they have already seen a number of maidens fall victim to the same danger under similar circumstances, with no hero to rescue them. Constantine's act of romantic heroism lies in that, shunning human sacrifice, or pagan blood sacrifice of any kind, he rescues Anthousa (if Constantinople's *tyche*, like the previous ones, was supposed to be named after an actual girl¹²⁵) or any prospective victim, and, by introducing a new way to establish *tychai*, all future victims. And so the *tyche* sacrifices, despite their obvious affinities with the 'penny dreadfuls,' are more than a simple catalogue of terrors; they are a preparation of the audience for the climactic heroism of Constantine.

¹²³ See A. Hermann, "Antinous infelix: Zur Typologie des Heiligen-Unheiligen in der Spätantike" in *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, ed. A. Stüber & A. Hermann (Münster 1964) 155–67; P. Guyot, "Antinous als Eunuch: Zur christlichen Polemik gegen das Heidentum" *Historia* 30 (1981) 250–54.

¹²⁴ Strabo, 7.3.9, quoting Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F 42), notes in regard to accounts of Scythian cannibalism that terrible and strange phenomena produce a vivid effect.

¹²⁵ No girl named Anthousa is mentioned in Malalas. 'Anthousa' is the Greek equivalent of *Flora*, the 'sacred name' of Rome; see Alföldi (1948) 114; Dagron (1974) 44, 45. It is possible that no actual girl was described as being present at the inauguration of Constantinople's *tyche*, but this does not seem altogether consistent with the literal-mindedness displayed in the rest of the *tyche* sacrifice narratives.

There are a number of incidents in the ancient novels which follow a similar pattern. The heroine is about to be sacrificed or ritually killed, the audience is made to realize the danger she is in, and the hero arrives to rescue her in the nick of time.¹²⁶ In the novels there is also a pronounced erotic aspect to these incidents. In the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesus, Anthia, the virginal heroine, is captured by bandits and about to be sacrificed to Ares, her peril is realized through a detailed description of the sacrificial rite, at the last minute she is rescued by Perilaus, and this rescue leads to repeated proposals of marriage (which constitute the erotic aspect).¹²⁷ There is a similar narrative in both ps.-Lucian's *Onos* and the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.¹²⁸ A maiden (Charite in Apuleius) is captured by bandits, and after an escape attempt they plan to sew her up in the belly of the ass (not a sacrifice, but a death deliberated to the point of ritual). The danger she faces is brought home to the reader through the suicide of the old crone who was guarding her, the bandits' callous treatment of her corpse, and the sadistic debate over the most appropriate method of death. But she is rescued by her fiancé, and a wedding follows. In Achilles Tatius' novel Leucippe is snatched away to serve as a virgin sacrifice, her peril is realized not only in the detailed description of the exotic sacrificial rite with its libations and Egyptian chanting, but also in the apparent performance of the sacrifice itself, leaping entrails and all (although the hero and the reader later discover that this was a sham).¹²⁹ The erotic aspect of this situation is only articulated later when Cleitophon refers to the dangers they have overcome, including human sacrifice and ritual murder, as an inducement to premature sexual union, which Leucippe demurely refuses.¹³⁰

The pattern can be found not only in the narrative of the novels, but in the description of visual effects as well. Achilles Tatius describes two

¹²⁶ These incidents in the novels probably have their antecedents in the myths of Theseus and the Minotaur, and Perseus and Andromeda, but the monsters of the myths add another element to the basic narrative.

¹²⁷ Xenophon of Ephesus, 2.13.

¹²⁸ Ps.-Lucian, *Onos* 22–26; Apuleius, *Met.* 4.23–27, 6.25–7.13. Apuleius makes it clear that his bandits, like those in Xenophon, are devotees of Ares; see *Met.* 4.22, 7.5, 11. Lucius, the sometime ass, moreover, shows that virginity is important to the erotic aspect of the narrative, by demonstrating a great concern for the maiden's chastity when he suspects her of being a slattern when he sees her recognize her fiancé; *Met.* 7.11.

¹²⁹ Achilles Tatius, 3.12, 15.

¹³⁰ Achilles Tatius, 4.1.

pictures by the same artist, one of Andromeda and one of Prometheus.¹³¹ These two pictures are united by the similar peril of their subjects: bound to rocks, menaced by beasts, and saved by Argive heroes. They are both depicted at the timely moment of salvation by Perseus and Heracles respectively. There is an erotic element in the depiction of Andromeda only. 'Lovely fear' accentuates her beauty (Prometheus' expression, by contrast, conveys only pain), and she is dressed in a wedding garment to be married to Hades. The erotic undertones of Andromeda's situation, moreover, might have been generally understood. The *Imagines* of Philostratus include Eros as the divine helper of Perseus, and say that the beauty of Andromeda was perfected by her mixed emotions of fear and joy at the moment of her rescue.¹³² Heliodorus mentions a painting of Andromeda, depicted nude and only just rescued by Perseus, in the bedroom of the Ethiopian king and queen (while other scenes decorate less intimate parts of the palace), which catches the eye of the queen during sexual congress, and so might be intended as erotic art.¹³³

The most effective means of having the audience realize the danger facing the heroine is for numerous doomed victims, like the *tyche* sacrifices, to suffer the very fate threatening her before her final salvation. This is a well-worn device in the repertoire of horror movies and thrillers.¹³⁴ There are no examples of such previous victims in the ancient novel, but this device is present in the very bedrock of Graeco-Roman literature. In the *Odyssey*, the audience knows what terrors await the hero in the cave of the

¹³¹ Achilles Tatius, 3.6–8. See E. Harlan, *The Description of Paintings as a Literary Device and its Application in Achilles Tatius* (Columbia University: Ph.D. diss., 1965) 107–22; S. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton 1989) 46, 49, 54–62.

¹³² Philostratus, *Imag.* 1.29. See Bartsch (1989) 54, 71.

¹³³ Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 4.8. See Bartsch (1989) 48.

¹³⁴ Two pertinent examples might be offered, one from a classic of horror literature, and one from the popular cinema. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra succumbs to the ghastly fate from which the heroes of the piece are only just able to save Mina Harker. On account of the first victim the audience fully appreciates the peril of the one who is saved and the urgency of the efforts to save her. In one scene from 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom' (Paramount Pictures 1984), a film in which human sacrifice plays a significant part, the hero and the heroine, as well as the audience, witness a human sacrifice successfully carried out with great solemnity, so that all parties are fully aware of the danger facing the heroine when, in a later scene, she is about to be sacrificed in the same manner, and the rite is interrupted in the nick of time by the hero.

Cyclops because they first witness the death of Odysseus' companions at the hands of Polyphemus, before Odysseus, who is explicitly reserved for the last, manages to save himself.¹³⁵ An even more apposite example is found in Pausanias' story of the ghost at Temesa.¹³⁶ According to Pausanias, one of the crew of Odysseus raped a girl at Temesa and was consequently stoned to death by the locals. His ghost (*daimon* is the word used in Greek) began indiscriminately killing the people of Temesa, until they built a temple to him and began to offer him the most beautiful virgin as a wife every year. This continues until the boxer Euthymus, some time in the fifth century B.C., arrived, fought the ghost and drove him into the sea, and married the virgin intended for the ghost. Pausanias also describes a picture of the ghost: black in colour, frightful in appearance, and garbed in a wolf-skin. As in the *tyche* sacrifices, this story contains the killing in a formal religious context of virgin victims who are supposed to be married through the ritual, numerous previous victims since the legendary past, and an ultimate salvation by a hero. These examples from Homer and Pausanias show that Greek and Roman writers were aware of a device commonly used to evoke horror, and one apparently used by Bouttios. By evoking a story like that found in Pausanias, moreover, Bouttios implies that the *tyche*, rather than a benevolent or even capricious power, is a dark and malicious spirit, like the ghost, and seems to echo Eusebius' assertion that demons are the real instigators and recipients of blood sacrifice, including human sacrifice.¹³⁷

When the *tyche* sacrifice narratives are read altogether, Constantine's initiation of Constantinople's *tyche* without a virgin sacrifice becomes not merely one more incident, but the heroic climax, on the model of the rescues in the novel, of a grisly history of foundations accompanied by human sacrifice.¹³⁸ Such a climactic abolition of human sacrifice has further

¹³⁵ *Od.*, 9.216–479.

¹³⁶ Pausanias, 6.6.7–11. The story is also found in Strabo, 6.1.5 and Aelian, *VH* 8.18, although without the element of virgin sacrifice (the Temesans are said, rather, to pay a tribute to the ghost). See J. Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece* (London 1913) vol. 4, 23–24; D. Felton, *Haunted Greece and Rome* (Austin 1999) 26–27.

¹³⁷ Eusebius, *LC* 2.5, 7.6.

¹³⁸ It is tempting to look for parallels in the story of St. George as another example of the Christian appropriation of the 'romantic rescue' from Greek myth and fiction in late antiquity, but this is not a contemporary phenomenon. The legend of St. George begins to exhibit these traits at a much later date than the *tyche* sacrifice narratives. As E. Budge, *George of Lydda, the Patron Saint of England: A Study in the Cultus of St. George in Ethiopia* (London 1930) 40, indicates "[t]he

affinities with the novel inasmuch as at the climax of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* the Ethiopian priest, Sisimithres, sees the events of the romance as conspiring to convince the Ethiopians to give up their ancestral practice of human sacrifice.¹³⁹ The *tyche* sacrifices which precede the foundation of Constantinople are not only examples of the pagan wickedness abolished by Constantine, they also give a vivid impression of the dangers from which Constantine has rescued an imperiled heroine, be it a girl by the name of Anthousa or innocent maidenhood generally. Bouttios does not, however, fully exploit the erotic aspect of the rescue from virgin sacrifice found in the novels. The sympathies of Bouttios' readers are directed toward a lovely victim, but, as is appropriate for an emperor, the benefits of Constantine's heroism are not enjoyed by himself alone, but by his people as a whole.

Constantine and the *tyche* sacrifices

The presentation of Constantine as a hero at the climax of the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice is perfectly consistent with the polemical tone and intent which characterized much of the historiography of the fourth and fifth centuries. This polemic was, of course, an expression of the contention between traditional Graeco-Roman polytheism and Christianity, and much of its rhetoric polarized around the political champions of the two parties.¹⁴⁰ On the one hand, there was Eusebius' insistence that the Roman Empire, Christianized by Constantine, marked the culmination of world history, and Orosius' refutation of the pagan charge that the neglect of the traditional cults had brought about the troubles which beset the empire in his day by showing that wars and disasters were at least as frequent in the past.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, Eunapius — and to a lesser extent his follower Zosimus — vented his hatred of Christianity as a destructive innovation, vilified

version of the legend of George which makes him fight a dragon is older by centuries than that which makes him rescue a princess from a dragon. General currency was given to the latter form by Jacobus de Voragine," the thirteenth-century author of the *Legenda Aurea*.

¹³⁹ *Aeth.* 10.39; see R. Hunter, "The *Aithiopika* of Heliodorus: beyond interpretation?" in *Studies in Heliodorus*, ed. R. Hunter (Cambridge 1998) 58–59; J. Winkler, "The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*" in *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel*, ed. S. Swain (Oxford 1999) 344–48.

¹⁴⁰ Cameron and Hall, *Eusebius* 30–31, note that the use of *Lives* as vehicles for ideological messages was popular in the fourth century.

¹⁴¹ See Chesnut, "Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius," 687–713.

Constantine as a tyrant, and portrayed Julian as a model of every virtue.¹⁴² The depiction of Constantine as a singular hero who revolted against the depredations of his pagan predecessors which we have perceived in the fragments of Bouttios easily finds a place amidst the rhetorical battles which accompanied the waning of polytheism and the consolidation of Christian power around the turn of the fifth century. Bouttios' portrait of Constantine, moreover, agrees with the praise bestowed on that emperor, especially by Eusebius, not merely in broad outline, but in detail as well.¹⁴³

The rhetoric of 'bloodless sacrifice' which might be considered one of the few identifying features of Bouttios' depiction of Constantine, also figures in Eusebius' laudatory treatments of the career of Constantine. In the *Life of Constantine* the emperor's prayers and thanksgiving to God, his banquet with the bishops, and the prayers of the bishops are all described as acceptable sacrifices, either 'sacrifices without fire or smoke' or 'bloodless sacrifices'.¹⁴⁴ In a letter to the Persian king, quoted by Eusebius, Constantine contrasts his prayers to God with the blood and foul odours of sacrifice.¹⁴⁵ The 'bloodless sacrifices' in the *Praise of Constantine* have an even closer bearing on the 'sacrifice' which inaugurates the *tyche* of Constantinople. In this work, Eusebius describes Constantine as rejecting ancient usage and celebrating his Tricennalia not with bloody sacrifices to ghouls, demons, and false gods, but with the devotion of his 'kingly soul' and his mind to the Supreme God as a sacrifice 'without fire and the shedding of blood'. And God is supposed to accept this sacrifice and extend the reign of Constantine.¹⁴⁶ Christ alone, says Eusebius, teaches his followers to offer 'bloodless and rational sacrifices' (ἀναίματος δὲ καὶ λογικὰς θυσίας) through their prayers and the silent contemplation of God. These 'bloodless sacrifices,' offered on altars in churches throughout the world, have displaced gory animal sacrifice, as well as the cruel, mad practice of human sacrifice.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² See R. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicizing Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus* (Liverpool 1981) vol. i, 2, 3, 7, 19–23, 88–89.

¹⁴³ A. Cameron, "Form and Meaning: the *Vita Constantini* and the *Vita Antonii*" in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (Berkeley 2000) 72–88, reviews previous work on the subject, and brings out the selective focus of the *Life of Constantine* as a hybrid of panegyric and historical documentation.

¹⁴⁴ Euseb., *VC* 1.53.1–2, 3.15.1, 4.45.2.

¹⁴⁵ Euseb., *VC* 4.10.1.

¹⁴⁶ Euseb., *LC* 2.5, 3.1.

¹⁴⁷ Euseb., *LC* 16.9–10.

Human sacrifice recurs in the *Praise of Constantine* as a feature of pagan wickedness which has been dispelled by the Christianity which Constantine promotes. Ancient pagan rulers, deceived by demons, those 'spiritual barbarians,' offered their own people as sacrifices to the gods and made war against the champions of truth.¹⁴⁸ A catalogue of human sacrifice is recited as a contribution to the evils and miseries of the world which prompted the merciful Incarnation of the *Logos*.¹⁴⁹ And the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of the Saviour serve as an apotropaic aversion of the human sacrifices which used to be performed.¹⁵⁰ Here, as in Bouttios, we have human sacrifice habitually performed by pagan rulers, and its cessation noted as a singular event, the consequence of Christianity.

The Christian concern with virginity, which plays a part in the *tyche* sacrifice narratives, also manifests itself in Eusebius' accounts of Constantine. Maxentius, the rival of Constantine, is said to wantonly violate the most respectable women, and resistance is only offered to him by those Christian women who would rather commit suicide than forfeit their chastity.¹⁵¹ Constantine's victory, of course, saves Rome from such outrages. But Maxentius' crimes were not considered unique, rather they were part of the regular state of the fallen world.¹⁵² Constantine also modified the law so as to improve the legal position of those who had chosen a life of virginity, whom he held in particularly high regard.¹⁵³ Maxentius, like Trajan and other virgin-sacrificers in Bouttios, is emblematic of the attacks on virginity by pagan rulers which are finally defeated by Constantine.

We have seen that in the overall composition of the accounts of *tyche* sacrifice Constantine holds a unique place as a hero in the romantic mold who overturns the wicked rites of his predecessors. The biography of Constantine likewise presents him as unique, the superior of his forebears, and an innovator who undoes the evils of his rivals.¹⁵⁴ The literary genre demanded that the subject of an encomium should be favourably contrasted with his predecessors,¹⁵⁵ but the *Life of Constantine* sees Constantine as

¹⁴⁸ Euseb., *LC* 7.5–6.

¹⁴⁹ Euseb., *LC* 13.6b–8; cf. 13.15–16. See H. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley 1976) 176–77.

¹⁵⁰ Euseb., *LC* 15.11–13. See Drake (1976) 178–79.

¹⁵¹ Euseb., *VC* 1.33–34; cf. *HE* 8.14.2.

¹⁵² Euseb., *LC* 7.7.

¹⁵³ Euseb., *VC* 4.26.3, 28. See Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius*, 321–23.

¹⁵⁴ See Cameron "Form and Meaning," 83.

¹⁵⁵ See Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius* 33 and n. 114.

unique. He is the only emperor to whom God revealed the true religion and whom God made his herald, alone among emperors he received baptism, and alone among mortals he reigned after his death.¹⁵⁶ Constantine is singularly superior, moreover, not only to previous Roman emperors, but also to kings throughout history, such as Alexander¹⁵⁷ — who appears in Bouttios as the perpetrator of a *tyche* sacrifice.

Constantine is presented as superior not only to his predecessors, but also to his rivals. These rivals, whom Constantine must defeat in order to achieve sole rule, are depicted in turn not merely as political enemies, but as tyrants and persecutors of the Church who make war on God.¹⁵⁸ Maxentius in particular is shown as a tyrant of the deepest dye. In addition to his rape of chaste women, noted above, he engages in sorcery to preserve his throne, and even rips open pregnant women and investigates the entrails of newborn babies.¹⁵⁹ The rulers who engage in *tyche* sacrifice, with their violation of chaste women, concomitant persecution of Christians (as by Trajan), and ritual killing of innocent victims, reflect the rivals of Constantine as they are presented by Eusebius.

In his insistence that Constantine holds a unique place among emperors and in the annals of history, Eusebius goes further than simply claiming that Constantine is superior to his predecessors and his rivals. Only a friend of God, says Eusebius, one who imitates the kingly principles of the Heavenly Kingdom, may truly be called a king. Another, deceived, sinful, and enslaved to evil, might seem to rule by ‘tyrannical force’ (νομίζεται ποτε τυραννικῇ βίᾳ κρατεῖν).¹⁶⁰ This is a revolutionary thesis, which has received very little scholarly attention. In effect, it invalidates the rule of

¹⁵⁶ Euseb., *VC* 1.4, 4.62.4, 67.3.

¹⁵⁷ Euseb., *VC* 1.7.1–2, 8.1, 4.74–75.

¹⁵⁸ Euseb., *VC* 1.5.1, 12.2, 2.1.2, 18, 3.1–3, 12.2; cf. *LC* 7.12. See Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius*, 37–38, 42.

¹⁵⁹ Euseb., *VC* 1.27.1, 36.1, 37.2, *HE* 8.14.5. On the depiction of Maxentius as a tyrant, and Constantine as a legitimate ruler in panegyrics other than Eusebius, see B. Warmington, “Aspects of Constantinian Propaganda in the Panegyrici Latini” *TAPA* 104 (1974) 379, 381.

¹⁶⁰ Euseb., *LC* 5.2–3. See K. Setton, *Christian Attitude towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century, Especially as Shown in Addresses to the Emperor* (New York 1941) 50; Drake, *In Praise of Constantine* 161–62. The panegyrist Nazarius, *Panegyricus* 1, 1 (*Panegyrici Veteres*, ed. C. Schwarz [London 1828] X, vol. 3, 1439) does say that Constantine towers above his predecessors as they towered above private citizens (see Setton, *Christian Attitude* 42), but Eusebius, and Bouttios, exceed this laudatory rhetoric by suggesting that Constantine’s rule is legitimate, and that of his predecessors was not.

pagan emperors by claiming that only the king who rules in accord with God is in truth a king. So pagan rulers, those guilty of human sacrifice and harrying the champions of truth, only seem to rule (κατατείν νομιζόμενοι) in the same way that a false god only seems to be a god (ἐνομίσθη θεός).¹⁶¹ Constantine is the first true ruler of the Roman empire, of any gentile kingdom, the first who does not rule as a tyrant. Bouttios tries to make Eusebius' theory manifest in the violent, sacrilegious crimes and tyrannical abuses he imputes to pagan rulers, and in Constantine's repudiation and redemption of the precedent they set.

In Eusebius' works of biography and panegyric Constantine is extolled as a singular hero who instituted 'bloodless sacrifice' in the place of gory animal and especially human sacrifice, the promotion of virginity in the place of the violation of women, and truly valid monarchical government in the place of the exercise of tyrannical violence. Bouttios presents Constantine in the same light at the climax of his accounts of *tyche* sacrifice. There is, however, a significant difference in the methods of the two authors.¹⁶² While Eusebius is selective in the details he includes and tendentious in the slant he gives them, what he offers is an interpretation, through the lens of Christian ideology, of historical facts which might be agreed upon by most parties. Bouttios, by contrast, is writing a fiction which takes the form of history or might pass for history,¹⁶³ and in this fiction historical 'fact' can be manufactured to give pagan rulers of every age the semblance of the propagandist image of Constantine's rivals, and to substantiate Eusebius' claim that only the godly (i.e., Christian) ruler is in truth a king, not a tyrant.

Julian and the *tyche* sacrifices

If Bouttios was a proponent of Eusebius' theory of the exclusive validity of Christian monarchy, he would have been opposed on principle to the reign of Julian the Apostate. And indeed it seems very likely that Julian is the unnamed *bête noire* and target of Bouttios. Constantine is clearly his hero,

¹⁶¹ Euseb., *LC* 7.3, 6.

¹⁶² Hägg & Rousseau, *Greek Biography and Panegyric*, 4–5, note that while panegyricists might "sin by omission," their immediate audiences prevent them from outright lies, but there is no check on the additions and inventions of biographers whose works are read at a greater remove from their subjects.

¹⁶³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 1.41.1), Strabo (11.6.3), and Plutarch (*Theseus* 1.3) write of giving the form or appearance of history to historicized myth or outright fictions of the unknown past; see M. Fox, *Roman Historical Myths: The Regal Period in Augustan Literature* (Oxford 1996) 79.

and Constantine and Julian were often contrasted by their respective supporters — most vociferously by Eunapius who, writing in the final decades of the fourth century, appears to have been a contemporary of Bouttios.¹⁶⁴ In at least one legend this antagonism of the imperial champions of Christianity and of paganism is centered on the *Tyche* of Constantinople. According to the *Souda*, Constantine erected a prominent statue of the *tyche* of the city in his new capital, but engraved a cross on her head; because of this Christianizing mark, Julian buried the statue in a ditch.¹⁶⁵ The figure of the *tyche* as the focus of this story opposing Julian to Constantine strongly suggests that Bouttios' history of *tyche* sacrifices is intended not only as praise of Constantine, but also as a condemnation of Julian. The fragments of Bouttios are, moreover, consistent on many points with the Christian diatribe against Julian, and may be seen to respond to the policy and the writings of the Apostate.

Tyche, as a goddess, and as an idea, appears significantly time and again in the reign of Julian, and in responses to it. According to Ammianus, Julian commended the outcome of his bid for the throne to *Fortuna*.¹⁶⁶ The words of the historian seem to reflect the sentiments of Julian. Julian wrote his uncle and namesake that if it had come to battle with Constantius he had intended to entrust everything to *Tyche* and the gods and await their decision.¹⁶⁷ In his *Letter to Themistius* Julian acknowledges *Tyche* as the capricious force which rules the lives of men, especially statesmen, testing and undoing both those to whom she is hostile and those whom she favours.¹⁶⁸ Julian demonstrates this principle in the *Caesars*, where *Tyche* abandons Pompey and favours Octavian.¹⁶⁹ *Tyche* also appears in Sallustius' Neoplatonist primer, *On the Gods and the Universe* — a work

¹⁶⁴ See Blockley (1981) 3, 7, 19–23.

¹⁶⁵ *Souda* apud ΜΩυον (M 1064); Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* vol. 3, 395.24–29; cf. *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* 38; see Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale* 41, 309 n.1; Cameron & Herrin, *Constantinople* 217–18.

¹⁶⁶ Amm. Marc., 21.5.13; see P. Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford 1981) 77.

¹⁶⁷ Julian, *Epist.* 28 (*Letter to his Uncle*).

¹⁶⁸ Julian, *Epist.* 6 (*Letter to Themistius*), 256C–257D; see Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism* 90–91, 95. Among Julian's sympathizers *Tyche* also played an important role in Libanius' autobiographical *Oration* 1 (esp. c. 266); see W. Liebeschuetz, "Libanius and Late Antique Autobiography," forthcoming in a *Festschrift* for Frank Norman.

¹⁶⁹ Julian, *Caes.* 323B, 330A; see Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, 200.

probably endorsed by Julian¹⁷⁰ — as the power of the gods to order various unforeseen events for the good in the sublunar world.¹⁷¹ But Julian did not merely give intellectual assent to *tyche* as a concept, he publicly worshipped her as a goddess. Julian himself mentions his visit to the Tyche shrine in Antioch.¹⁷² It was on such a visit, says Theodoret, that the future emperor Valentinian accompanied Julian and proved his faith. At the gates of the temple of Tyche he was sprinkled with water, and struck the temple servant responsible for this, saying he was defiled, not cleansed. As a consequence, Theodoret continues, he was exiled, but gained two kingdoms: the Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁷³ As in the story from the *Souda*, the figure of the Tyche is once again the focus of a contest between Christianity and paganism, specifically the paganism espoused by Julian. Julian's devotion to the Tyche cult also offended the Christians when he publicly sacrificed to a *tyche* image in the basilica of Constantinople.¹⁷⁴ *Tyche* also has a place in the rhetoric of Christian opposition to Julian. Despite the fact that Julian seized power, says Gregory of Nazianzus, the empire is not the 'spoils of fortune' (ἄρπαγμα τύχης) but the grant of proper succession, and he who possesses the kingdom does not necessarily hold the full measure of the honour of the office¹⁷⁵ (which idea returns to Eusebius' theme of the invalidity of certain rulers). Gregory also bemoans the fact that Julian's career, and God's patience with him, gave people cause to doubt the

¹⁷⁰ See Nock (1926) xcvi–civ; G. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, Mass. 1976) 86, 125; Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, 154, 159.

¹⁷¹ Sallustius, 9; see Nock, *Sallustius* lxxv, 20–21; Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, 157–58. The panegyrist Claudius Mamertinus, 23.6 (*Panegyrici Veteres*, ed. Schwarz, XI, vol. 3, 1530), praises Julian by saying that before his ascension fortune and fear, rather than the principles of astronomy, governed the lives of men (*Prorsus terra marique non ratione coelesti, sed casu ac temere vivebatur*). Mamertinus seems to present *casus*, if not *fortuna*, as a malevolent, or at best ambiguous force which is not the best possible ruling principle for the world. We do not know, however, to what extent Mamertinus was familiar with Julian's public or private philosophy, particularly in regard to *Tyche*.

¹⁷² Julian, *Misop.* 346B (cf. Amm. Marc. 23.1.6); see Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, 200.

¹⁷³ Theodoret, *HE* 3.12.

¹⁷⁴ Socrates Schol., *HE* 3.11.4. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 4.92, also notes that the ire of Julian was turned against Caesarea in Cappadocia, apparently because of the citizens' mistreatment of the *Tyche* statue or shrine in that city.

¹⁷⁵ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.46; see Setton, *Christian Attitude*, 107. Setton, *Christian Attitude*, 212–13, also notes that the Christian response to Julian was based on the "Socratic distinction between true kingship and tyranny."

government of some cosmic rulership (κυβέρνησις) or the principle of requital (ἀνταπόδοσις), and to suspect that 'Chance' (τὸ αὐτόματον) ruled the world.¹⁷⁶

The idea of 'bloodless sacrifice,' which recurs in the praise of Constantine, also appears in Christian criticism of Julian, and in terms verbally closer to Bouttios' account of the inauguration of Constantinople's *tyche*. Gregory characterizes his *Oration against Julian* itself as a 'sacrifice of praise' (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) and a 'bloodless offering of words' (τὴν ἀναίμακτον τῶν λόγων τιμὴν).¹⁷⁷ He says that Julian's secret sacrifices undid the Christian rites and 'cleansed' the emperor from the 'bloodless sacrifice' (τῆς ἀναίμακτου θυσίας) of the Christians.¹⁷⁸ The blood sacrifices of the pagans, according to Gregory, polluted the Christian altars of 'bloodless sacrifice' (ἀναίμακτου θυσίας).¹⁷⁹ Gregory's wording is remarkably similar to Bouttios' expression for the praiseworthy sacrifice which instituted the *tyche* of the new capital: θυσίαν ἀναίμακτον. It is possible that a fairly wide audience, even if they were unfamiliar with the writings of Gregory, would take this phrase to refer somehow to Julian. Julian's policy of reinvigorating the rites of blood sacrifice scandalized not only the Christians, but also some of his pagan supporters, who objected to animal sacrifice on philosophical grounds and preferred some form of 'bloodless sacrifice'.¹⁸⁰ Julian's sacrifice must have struck a great many people with no vested ideological interests as remarkable, since disuse had made animal sacrifice largely unfamiliar.

Human sacrifice also pervades the rhetoric and the rumours instigated by Julian's reign. Gregory assumes that Julian would admire literary examples of human sacrifice.¹⁸¹ A number of the outrages committed by the pagans are implicitly or explicitly presented by the Christians as human sacrifice. Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, claims that under Julian certain 'philosophers' ritually killed infants for the purpose of divination and cannibalism.¹⁸² Gregory says that in a church in Alexandria the blood of sacrificial animals mingled with the blood of murdered Christians.¹⁸³ Gregory also relates one highly relevant incident in lurid detail. In Arethusa

¹⁷⁶ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 5.24.

¹⁷⁷ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.4. The first phrase is borrowed from Ps. 50 (LXX 49).23.

¹⁷⁸ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.52.

¹⁷⁹ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 5.29.

¹⁸⁰ S. Bradbury, "Julian's Pagan Revival and the Decline of Blood Sacrifice," *Phoenix* 49 (1995) 332-47.

¹⁸¹ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.70.

¹⁸² Socrates Schol., *HE* 3.13.11.

¹⁸³ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.86, cf. 5.26, 39.

the mob is said to have seized consecrated virgins, publicly stripped them, ripped them open and eviscerated them, before cannibalizing them and feeding them to pigs.¹⁸⁴ The deaths of these virgins are recounted in terms similar to the human sacrifice in the fragments of Lollianus.¹⁸⁵ So here we have, as in Trajan's *tyche* sacrifice, human sacrifice, the violation and killing of virgins, and the martyrdom of Christians combined. Gregory is, however, not able to fix the blame for these atrocities directly upon Julian, albeit he does consider him their instigator and satisfied observer.¹⁸⁶ Even when Gregory reports bodies hidden in the Orontes or in the cisterns of the palace at Antioch, the bodies of youths and maidens (παρθέναι) killed for purposes of necromancy or divination or sacrifice, and the bodies of martyrs, he goes no further than to say that Julian ordered the concealment of the crimes of others, not the killings themselves.¹⁸⁷ It is Theodoret, writing some time later but undoubtedly preserving earlier material, who makes Julian himself a ritual murderer in a macabre story. On his march against Persia Julian is said to have visited the temple at Carrhae, and when he left had the doors sealed and guarded until his return. When news of his death reached the city the temple was opened, and inside was discovered the body of a woman hung up by the hair, her arms stretched out, and her belly ripped open, supposedly in order to divine the outcome of the Persian campaign.¹⁸⁸ Here is the clear echo of the *tyche* sacrifice: a pitiable woman

¹⁸⁴ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.87, cf. 5.29.

¹⁸⁵ Lollianus, B1 recto; see Winkler, "Lollianos," 166–75.

¹⁸⁶ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.90, cf. 93, 94.

¹⁸⁷ Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.92, cf. 2.9, 13, 23, 25, 26. John Chrysostom, *De Sancto Babyla et Contra Julianum et Gentiles* 14 (79), holds Julian responsible for reintroducing necromancy and infant sacrifice, suppressed since the advent of Christ.

¹⁸⁸ Theodoret, *HE* 3.21; see Green, *The City of the Moon God* 50–51, cf. 115, on Julian at Carrhae. The charge does not seem to have been altogether uncommon in the fourth century. We have already seen that Eusebius (*HE* 8.14.5, *VC* 1.36.1) accused Maxentius of ripping open pregnant women. Ammianus Marcellinus (29.17) criticizes Valens for pardoning the tribune Numerius after he was convicted on his own confession of cutting open the womb of a woman and removing her fetus for purposes of necromancy.

The sacrifice at Carrhae is popularly assumed to have been nothing more than a Christian slander against the Apostate; see C. Head, *The Emperor Julian* (Boston 1976) 153; G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of monotheism in late antiquity* (Princeton 1993) 62. R. Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (Berkeley 1976) 195–96, and Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate*, 109–10, mention Julian's stop at Carrhae and his sacrifices there, but say nothing of the rumours of ritual murder. Such a deed, however, should hardly be considered impossible for a man in whom

done to death by a pagan ruler — a tyrant to his enemies — in a self-serving sacrificial ritual.

Bouttios' accounts of *tyche* sacrifice are perhaps more than another example of the Christian attack on Julian. They can also be read as a response to some of the literary tastes and productions of Julian. The work of Bouttios is most obviously a counterpart to Julian's *Caesars*. Julian introduces this work as a 'myth,' but one that conveys a worthwhile message.¹⁸⁹ Bouttios' history with its palpable fiction of human sacrifices performed by famous kings might also seem to be a purposeful myth. As an examination of the virtues and vices of rulers the *tyche* narratives are comparable to the *Caesars*. Julian casts his net widely so as to include Alexander of Macedon in the company of the *Caesars*,¹⁹⁰ just as Bouttios treats not only Alexander, but Seleucus and certain mythical kings along with the Roman emperors. The opposition of Constantine and Julian is implicit in the *Caesars* as in Bouttios. Julian condemns the folly of Constantine and had him consigned to punishment, while he awards the prize to Marcus Aurelius, after whom he had modeled himself.¹⁹¹ In another regard, Bouttios seems to be intentionally unlike Julian. The emperor considered erotic fiction inappropriate reading for himself and his priests,¹⁹² and so Bouttios may have considered it particularly piquant to borrow from a genre Julian despised in order to compose an attack on him. Finally, it appears that in his response to the Cynic Heraclius Julian attempted to rehabilitate Euripides as a pious mythographer,¹⁹³ and it may be more jousting on the part of Bouttios that he cites Euripides in his own anti-pagan mythography.

Thus it may be seen that there are very strong indications that Bouttios' accounts of *tyche* sacrifices were composed as an attack on Julian — quite as much as in order to present Constantine as a hero. In Christian history and legend the opposition of Constantine and Julian, as well as of Christianity and paganism, often came to a significant head in incidents involving the figure and cult of the *tyche*. The *tyche* was also recognized as important to Julian, personally, philosophically, and in his religious policy.

were coupled a grotesque superstition, remarkable even in the generally superstitious climate of late antiquity, and the supreme power.

¹⁸⁹ Julian, *Caes.* 306A–C.

¹⁹⁰ Julian, *Caes.* 316A–D.

¹⁹¹ Julian, *Caes.* 335–36.

¹⁹² Julian, *Epist.* 89b (*Fragment of a Letter to a Priest*) 301B–C.

¹⁹³ Julian, *Epist.* 7 (*Letter to the Cynic Heraclius*) 214–21; see Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, 135.

The rumours surrounding Julian, concerning the outrages of pagans during his reign, and especially concerning his own indulgence in human sacrifice at Carrhae, might very well have suggested the form of the accusation Bouttios leveled wholesale against pagan rulers in his polemical history. Likewise, the rhetoric of 'bloodless sacrifice' in the criticism of Julian contributes to the terms which prove Constantine's heroism. If some of the emperor's critics echoed Gregory's reserve and hesitated to fix the blame for atrocities committed during his reign directly upon Julian, Bouttios suggests that not only Julian, but, since time out of mind, all pagan kings were guilty of tyranny, abuse and the most appalling crimes. Bouttios' wide scope accommodates Eusebius' theory on the invalid monarchy of non-Christian rulers, as well as responding to the breadth of Julian's own critique of past rulers in the *Caesars*. Thus Bouttios appears to address not only the reign, but also the writings of Julian.

Tyche is not mentioned at all in Malalas' account of Julian the Apostate,¹⁹⁴ and there is nothing to indicate that Bouttios explicitly connected Julian with his history. So it might fairly be asked why this is the case, if we are correct in assuming that the *tyche* sacrifice narratives are intended as an attack on Julian. The answer probably lies in a combination of hatred and fear. In the *Life of Constantine* Eusebius follows a policy of *damnatio memoriae* in regard to the enemies of Constantine and the Church. He characterizes the biographers of other emperors as wasting their time on "works suited to the silence of oblivion and darkness."¹⁹⁵ He notes the official *damnatio memoriae* of Maximian (without mentioning him by name) in the aftermath of his conspiracy.¹⁹⁶ He refers to Galerius as "the foremost in evils, whoever that might have been" (τὸν πρωτοστάτην τῶν κακῶν, ὅστις ποτ' ἦν ἐκεῖνος).¹⁹⁷ And he quotes one of Constantine's letters in which Diocletian and the other tetrarchs are criticized for their persecutions, but not named.¹⁹⁸ Whether it was composed in the late fourth century or the early fifth century, the *Carmen contra paganos* is closely contemporary Bouttios' history.¹⁹⁹ The victim of this Christian attack on an

¹⁹⁴ Malalas, 13.18–25.

¹⁹⁵ Eusebius, *VC* 1.10.3.

¹⁹⁶ Eusebius, *VC* 1.47.1.

¹⁹⁷ Eusebius, *VC* 1.56.2.

¹⁹⁸ Eusebius, *VC* 2.49–51.

¹⁹⁹ See T. Mommsen, "Carmen codicis Parisini 8084," *Hermes* 4 (1870) 350–63; G. Manganaro, "La reazione pagan a Roma nel 408–9 d.c. e il poemetto anonimo 'Contra Paganos,'" *GIF* 13 (1960) 210–24; idem, "Il poemetto anonimo contra paganos: testo tradizione e commento," *Nuovo Didaskalion* 11 (1961) 23–45; J. Matthews, "The Historical Setting of the 'Carmen contra paganos' (cod. Par. Lat.

important Roman official and his indulgence in pagan rites is likewise unnamed, and his identity is still debated. Bouttios might have wished likewise to condemn Julian to *damnatio memoriae*. This is not to say that he did not want Julian to be recognized as the target of his attack. As Hedrick puts it, "The *damnatio memoriae* did not negate historical traces, but created gestures that served to dishonor the record of the person and so, in an oblique way, to confirm memory."²⁰⁰

Bouttios may also have feared retribution from the supporters of Julian. Despite what the Christian reaction might suggest, Julian's death did not elicit immediate and ecstatic celebration throughout the empire.²⁰¹ Julian still had supporters even in Antioch, where he himself was struck by his own unpopularity. The death of an emperor did not initiate wholesale 'régime change,' and officers appointed during Julian's lengthy stay in Antioch would have retained their positions. We know that in Antioch Libanius, the intransigent pagan rhetorician, did not balk at publicly maintaining his respect for Julian after his death.²⁰² Even the Arians of Antioch in a petition to Jovian refer to Julian as 'most beloved of God' after his death.²⁰³ Bouttios might have considered it impolitic to be too obvious in making Julian the target of his polemic.²⁰⁴ It is even possible that the *tyche* sacrifice narratives were composed while Julian himself was living in Antioch, as part of the raillery that his residence aroused in the city.

8084)," *Historia* 19 (1970) 464–79; L. Cracco Ruggini, *Il paganesimo romano tra religione e politica (384–394 d.C.): per una reinterpretazione del Carmen contra paganos (Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei: Memorie, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche: ser. 8, vol. 23, fasc. 1 / Roma 1979) 3–143*; B. Croke & J. Harries, *Religious Conflict in Fourth-century Rome: A Documentary Study* (Sydney 1982) 80–83; T. Grünewald, "Der letzte Kampf des Heidentums in Rom? Zur postumen Rehabilitation des Virius Nicomachus Flavianus," *Historia* 41 (1992) 474–81; C. Hedrick, *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin 2000) 60–63, 270 n. 89.

²⁰⁰ Hedrick, *History and Silence*, 93.

²⁰¹ Gregory of Nazianzus writes his *Orations against Julian* in a tone of jubilation, and Theodoret (*HE* 3.22) says that there was rejoicing in Antioch at the news of Julian's death.

²⁰² See esp. Libanius, *Orat.* 17, 18, 24.

²⁰³ *Petitiones ad Iovianum Imperatorem* (PG 26, 820C); see Setton, *Christian Attitude*, 83–84.

²⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that Julian himself became a cover for the actual targets in the oblique dialectic of a later period; see, for example, E. Wind, "Julian the Apostate at Hampton Court" in *England and the Mediterranean Tradition: Studies in Art, History, and Literature*, ed. Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, University of London (London 1945) 131–38.

Conclusion

As Arnaldo Momigliano presents the situation, the Christian historians of the fourth century excelled in chronography, ecclesiastical history, and hagiography.²⁰⁵ Bouttios' fictionalizing and tendentious accounts of rulers from the recent and distant past fits into none of these categories (although the scope of the *tyche* sacrifice narratives might reflect the breadth of Eusebius' *Chronicle*). Even as a polemical historian, Bouttios stands at some remove from the more or less respectable erudition of Orosius. His fragments are an example of the appropriation of the formulae of fiction — as well as the dubious 'conspiracy theory' element in secular historiography — by Christian political history. The stories of *tyche* sacrifice, exploiting as they do the motifs of romanticized virgin sacrifice and heroic rescue, indicate that the Christian taste for fiction had more numerous and varied results than the *Apocryphal Acts* and the Clementine literature. They suggest, moreover, that where we have in the past identified error and misunderstanding in the historiography of the fourth century, we should be more ready to see pure invention, and enquire after its purpose.

The accounts of *tyche* sacrifice are certainly an attack on the *tyche* cult, an important religious and ideological competitor with Christianity in the fourth century. Fiction was practically a necessity in this attack, since, because of the *tyche*'s lack of a mythology, many of the usual avenues of apologetic assault were not open to Christian controversialists. Bouttios damned the *tyche* cult by making up stories which set its origins in barbaric rites of virgin sacrifice, which smacked of black magic and the abuses of tyranny. The plausibility of these stories might have been suggested by the image of the *tyche* figure central to the cult — and the denial of the principles of abstraction and personification which brought it into being. Bouttios also reflects the ambivalence of the place of the *tyche* in the fourth century. *Tyche* was rejected by the Church, but accepted by the Christian emperors. Certain concessions to the figure of the *tyche* were part of the price the Church paid for her new ascendancy. And so Bouttios denigrates the *tychai* established by pagan emperors, but is careful to depict the *tyche* of Constantinople, instituted by Constantine, as a novel event and a redemption of the *tyche* figure.

Constantine's inauguration of his new capital's *tyche* is not only an abrogation of the gruesome rites of the pagan past, it is also the climactic rescue of any potential future victims. Bouttios portrays Constantine as a

²⁰⁵ See Momigliano "Pagan and Christian Historiography."

hero in the novelistic mold, saving a damsel in distress. But Constantine's unique heroism is also in accord with Eusebius and the Christian political theory of the fourth century. Constantine was supposed to have stood alone at a pivotal point in time, abolishing the errors of the past and ushering in a new era of Christian Empire, which is the culmination of the progress of world history. As a friend and emulator of God, Constantine is a true example of the monarchical principle, and so the first true king. Bouttios' fictions of the past give vivid expression to this theory. Constantine's predecessors are not simply shown to fall short of ideal monarchy. It is evidently permissible to impute any kind of monstrosity to a pagan ruler — perhaps to demonstrate the invariable character of the godless monarch, perhaps so that such calumnies should be believed and the tyrants' memory damned to opprobrium.

It was probably one such pagan ruler in particular who prompted Bouttios' composition in the first place. The reputation of Julian the Apostate was dogged by rumours and accusations of ritual murder and human sacrifice, possibly during his reign and certainly after his death. It must have seemed particularly appropriate to level this same charge against all pagan rulers, and combine it with an attack on *Tyche*, a favourite goddess of Julian's, and with the praise of Constantine, whom Julian despised. So Julian is made a party with the other pagan kings and godless emperors: tyrants, practitioners of barbaric rituals, murderers, and persecutors of the Church. This wholesale condemnation of princes is a far cry from the respectful tone of the second-century Christian apologists who addressed their works to emperors, and made the mob, not the magistrates, responsible for the persecutions which beset them. But in the course of the fourth century the Church had come into its own as the arbiter of imperial legitimacy.²⁰⁶ Emperors were declared true and valid inasmuch as they were good Christians. Julian's reign was punctuated by incidents of defiance on the part of the Church and her members, not marked by their former general obedience. Bouttios' denigration of pagan rulers is, nevertheless, reactionary, not revolutionary, upholding the established Constantinian order against the short-lived, repristinating innovations of Julian.²⁰⁷

Grant MacEwan College, Edmonton Alberta

²⁰⁶ See Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 120–54.

²⁰⁷ Dean Inge raises the question of revolution or reaction in regard to Julian himself; W. Inge "Julian—Apostate or Diehard?" in *Our Present Discontents* (New York 1939) 268–73.

Appendix

The close verbal parallels between Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the account of Orestes and Iphigenia in Malalas indicate that the author of the latter, if not Malalas himself was familiar with Euripides' play, and reduced some of its passages to more prosaic dialogue (dialogue of any kind being quite rare in Malalas' chronicle):

Malalas, v.32: λέγει Πυλάδῃ:
'δοκεῖ σοι θεᾶς εἶναι τάδε
μέλαθρα, ἐνθα σύν νηυσὶν ἦκαμεν;
ὁρῶ δὲ καὶ τῶν θανόντων ξένων τὰ
ὀστέα.'

I.T. Πυ. 68 ὁρῶ, ... / Ορ. 69
Πυλάδῃ, δοκεῖ σοι μέλαθρα ταῦτ'
εἶναι θεᾶς / 70 ἐνθ' Ἀργόθεν ναῦν
ποντίαν ἐστεῖλαμεν
75 τῶν καταθανόντων γ' ἀκροθίνια
ξένων

I.T. 625-6 strongly suggest that the burning of the victim to ashes is the norm, which would preclude any bones, but Bates, with comparison to *Bac.* 1212 ff., suggests that in l. 74 the σκύλα ('booty') under the wall are humans skulls.²⁰⁸

Malalas, v.32: λέγει τῷ Ὀρέστῃ·
'φύγωμεν, ἐὰν σωθῇσόμεθα.' ὁ δὲ
Ὀρέστης ἔφη· 'οὐ φεύγομεν· οὔτε
γὰρ φεύγειν εἰώθαμεν οὐδὲ τὸν
χρησμὸν τοῦ θεοῦ κακιστεύσομεν.'

I.T. 102 ἀλλὰ πρὶν θανεῖν, νεῶς
ἐπι / φεύγωμεν, ἥπερ δεῦρ'
ἐναυστολήσαμεν. / Πυ. φεύγειν
μὲν οὐκ ἀνεκτον οὐδὲ εἰώθαμεν' /
τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τε χρησμὸν οὐ
κακιστέον

Malalas, v.33: 'Ἀγαμέμνωνος καὶ
Κλυταμνήστρης κόρη, ἦκασι δύο
νεανίσκοι παρὰ τὴν κυανέαν.'

I.T. 238 Ἀγαμέμνωνός τε καὶ
Κλυταμνήστρας τεκνον
241 ἦκουσιν ἐς γῆν, κυανέαν
Συμπληγάδα / πλάτῃ φυγόντες,
δῶπτοι νεανίαι

Malalas, v.33: 'ποταποί; τίνοσ γῆς;
τί τοῦνομα ἔχουσιν οἱ ξένοι;

I.T. 246 ποδαποί; τίνοσ γῆς σχῆμ'
ἔχουσιν οἱ ξένοι; [Iphigenia's next
question (l. 248) concerns the
names of the strangers.]

²⁰⁸ W. N. Bates, *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris* (New York 1904) 43.

At this point in Malalas Iphigenia asks a number of questions about the Trojan War: cf. *I.T.* 517-550.

Malalas, v.33: 'ἕτερος πρὸς τὸν
ἕτερον ἔφη, Πυλάδῃ· τοῦ δὲ
συζύγου τὸ ὄνομα οὐκ ἴσμεν· οὐδὲ
γὰρ ἔφη.'

I.T. 249 Πυλάδης ἐκλήζεθ'
ἄτερος πρὸς θατέρου. / τοῦ
ξυζύγου δὲ τοῦ ξένου τί τοῦνομ'
ἦν; / οὐδεὶς τόδ' οἶδεν· οὐ γὰρ
εἰσηκούσαμεν.

Malalas, v.33: 'τί γὰρ κοινὸν
βουκόλος ἐν θαλάττῃ;'

I.T. 254 καὶ τίς θαλάσσης
βουκόλοις κοινωνία;

Malalas, v.33: 'βοῦς ἤκαμεν νύψαι
ἐν ἀλίᾳ δρόσω.'

I.T. 255 βοῦς ἤλθομεν νύψοντες
ἐναλίᾳ δρόσω.

Malalas, v.34: 'χώρας μὲν Ἑλλάδος,
πόλεως δὲ Μυκῆνης ὁ δυστυχῆς
πάρεμι.'

I.T. 495: Ἑλληνας
500: δυστυχεῖς
510: Μυκηναίων



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Prostitution in the Medieval Canon Law

James A. Brundage

Prostitution has been called the oldest human profession,¹ and it is certainly true that virtually every known system of positive law has had something to say about the prostitute, the pimp, the procurer, and the conduct of their business.² My purpose here is to examine the treatment of the harlot and her trade by the lawyers and lawgivers of the medieval church.

One difficult question must be faced at the outset: the definition of the term itself. What is prostitution, so far as the medieval canonists were concerned? The answer to this fundamental question involves two

1. It has even been suggested that prostitution may be older than humanity: investigators have characterized some forms of sexual behavior among chimpanzees and other primates as prostitution (see Vern L. Bullough, *The History of Prostitution* [New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1964], p. 4, and the literature cited there). The antiquity and ubiquity of prostitution among human societies has often been remarked upon, although Bullough points out (p. 14) that just how universal it may be depends upon one's definition of what behavior prostitution includes. It is clear that sexual promiscuity may be discovered in virtually every human society. Promiscuity and prostitution, however, are not necessarily synonymous, although the medieval canonists tended to identify the one with the other.

2. Thus although forbidden in the Mosaic law (Lev. 19:29, 21:7), prostitution obviously was practiced in ancient Israel (e.g., Gen. 38:12-26, Judges 11:2, 1 Kings 3:16-28, etc.). Sacral prostitution is implied, though not explicitly described, in the laws of Hammurabi (see *The Babylonian Laws*, ed., with translation and commentary, G. R. Driver and Sir John C. Miles, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955], 1:360-61, 366-67). Throughout the paper I have used synonyms for "prostitute" such as "harlot," "whore," "tart," "trollop," and the like. "Prostitute" is a relatively neutral, almost clinical term, while the other terms carry a certain amount of judgmental freight. Since the sources I have used employ terms which are more judgmental than neutral, it seemed appropriate to try to convey some sense of that fact by using English terms of a similar sort. The word *meretrix* in Latin, for example, carries about as much judgmental weight as "whore" does in English; it is certainly less neutral than "prostitute."

strands of thought. Prostitution may be treated as a moral category, in which case the element of sexual promiscuity will be prominently emphasized in the definition. Or prostitution may be treated primarily as a legal category, a type of trade which has implications for public order and policy. In this case, the element of gain, the cash nexus of the transaction, will tend to be emphasized. The moralist will mainly be concerned about the ethical problems of indiscriminate intercourse for the sake of gain; while the jurist will tend to analyze prostitution in terms of the hire-sale situation, will be concerned about the quasi contract established between the harlot and her customer, will have something to say about the property rights conveyed in the transaction, the price paid, and the value received in the exchange.

This contrast in viewpoints is particularly intriguing in the treatment of prostitution by the canonists, the lawyers of the medieval church. The canonists constructed an elaborate and closely reasoned system of jurisprudence to regulate all the branches of human activity that touched upon the moral interests, the business activities, and the social concerns of the church in medieval Europe. Since the church was far and away the largest and most intricate institutional structure in medieval society, its legal system was immensely influential in shaping the attitudes and dictating the limits of action and policy of medieval people at every level of society. Monarchs, monks, and merchants; bishops, businessmen, and bureaucrats; popes, princes, and pimps—all needed to know how to comply with or, if necessary, to evade, the legal sanctions devised by the canonists. Consequently, canon lawyers played critically important roles in determining the ways in which medieval society functioned. Partly for this reason, no doubt, the ranks of the canonists included some of the ablest and most powerful minds of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ingenuity and originality of their work is not always easy to perceive because of the technical medium in which they worked. Their insights and ideas tend to be embedded in lengthy and often tortuous legal treatises. Thus the ideas of a canonist are neither so immediately perceptible nor so pleasurable to read as, say, those of a poet. On the whole, though, the ideas of the canonists often had far greater impact on the functioning of governments, the enforcement of social policy, and the workings of business than the ideas of any comparable group of writers.

The canon law in its origins was an offshoot of moral theology and never wholly escaped its moralistic heritage. Yet the canonists also drew upon the Roman law as a major source of their arcane science, and they employed both legal and moral concepts in their writing. This duality accounts for some of the peculiarities in their treatment of prostitution.³

3. Prostitution is, in fact, extremely difficult to define satisfactorily. The problem is discussed by Bullough, pp. 1–2. A classic definition is given by Iwan Bloch, *Die Prostitution*, 2 vols. *Handbuch der gesamten Sexualwissenschaft* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1912–25), 1:38.

How, then, did the canonists define prostitution? As one might expect, both of the basic criteria, promiscuity and gain, were involved. The fundamental definition which they employed was coined by Saint Jerome (ca. 342–420): “A whore is one who is available for the lust of many men.”⁴ In the mid-twelfth century, when the canon law first began to take coherent shape, its founding father, the monk Gratian, incorporated Saint Jerome’s definition in his *Decretum* (ca. 1140). Gratian thereby set the framework within which later canonists were to deal with the whole problem of prostitution. For Gratian and the later lawyers of the medieval church, then, promiscuity was the controlling factor in determining who was a prostitute. There is much sense in this: it may be possible to be promiscuous without being a prostitute; but it is hardly possible to be a prostitute without being sexually promiscuous. The notion of promiscuity was further clarified by the decretists, the writers who commented on Gratian’s *Decretum*. The ordinary gloss, which became the standard exposition of the *Decretum* used in the universities as a textbook, defined the notion through a biological analogy: “Promiscuous: that is, she copulates indifferently and indiscriminantly, as in canine love. Dogs indeed copulate indifferently and indiscriminantly.”⁵ Other canonistic writers mentioned some additional considerations in their discussions of what prostitution meant. One of the most prominent thirteenth-century canonists, Cardinal Hostiensis (d. 1271) stressed the element of notoriety: a prostitute was not only sexually promiscuous, she was openly and publicly promiscuous.⁶ Both Hostiensis and an equally

Fernando Henriques, *Prostitution in Europe and the Americas*, 2 vols. (New York: Citadel Press, 1962), 1:17, attempts a slightly more explicit definition. A common-law definition of prostitution was set down by Justice Darling in *Rex v. de Munck*, [1918] 1 K.B.635: “We are of the opinion that prostitution is proved if it be shown that a woman offers her body commonly for lewdness for payment in return”; cited by T. E. James, *Prostitution and the Law* (London: Heinemann, 1951), p. 2.

4. D. 34 c. 16, citing Saint Jerome, *Epist.* 64.7 ad Fabiolem: “Vidua est, cuius maritus mortuus est. Eiecta, que a marito uiuente proicitur. Meretrix, que multorum libidini patet.” The conventional canonistic citation system is employed throughout this paper. For explanations, see Javier Ochoa Sanz and Aloisio Diez, *Indices canonum, titulorum et capitulorum corporis iuris canonici*, *Universa Bibliotheca Iuris*, Subsidia, vol. 1 (Rome: Commentarium pro Religiosis, 1964), pp. iv–v. The texts of the various parts of the *Corpus* are cited from the standard edition by Emil Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1879; reprint ed., Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1959). The *glossa ordinaria* will be cited from the Venice, 1605, edition in 4 vols.

5. C. 27 q. 1c. 41 *glos. ord.* ad v. *promiscuum*: “Promiscuum, id est, indifferenter et indistincte comiseret scilicet canino amore. Canes enim indifferenter et indistincte comiserentur.” Also Rolandus (later Pope Alexander III), *Summa* to C. 27 q. 1 c. 41 ad v. *promiscuum*, ed. Friedrich Thaner (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1874), p. 125.

6. Hostiensis (Henricus de Segusio), *In quinque Decretalium libri commentaria* (= *Lectura*) to X 4.1.20, no. 4; 5 vols. in 2 (Venice: apud Iuntas, 1581; reprint ed., Turin: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1965), vol. 4, fol. 6^{vb}: “Publicas id est meretrices, que multorum libidini patent, et melius xxxiiii dist. vidua [D. 34 c. 16], vel quarum publice venalis est turpitudine, xxxii q. iiii meretrices [C. 32 q. 4 c. 11].”

renowned canonistic writer of the next generation, Joannes Andrea (ca. 1270–1348), agreed that an element of deception is also involved in prostitution: the harlot systematically deceives those whom she serves.⁷ The deception that these lawyers had in mind was presumably the simulation of love or at least of emotional intimacy between the prostitute and her client.

When the canonists dealt with the element of gain in prostitution, they drew heavily upon the Roman law. The classical Roman law had defined prostitution as the offering of the body for sexual intercourse in return for money or other remuneration, at least so long as the woman made herself available to more than one or two lovers.⁸

The widespread practice of concubinage also complicated the attempts both of canonists and of medieval writers on the Roman law to define prostitution. The ancient Roman jurists, whose ideas were heavily relied upon by medieval lawyers, had assigned the concubine a status quite distinct from that of the prostitute. They considered the concubinage relation a relatively stable one, in contrast to the transient relationship of the prostitute and her customers. Thus the status of the concubine was closely related to that of the married woman in the Roman law, and concubinage might be treated as an informal type of marriage. The concubine and her lover were considered bound to one another, not simply by lust and sexual attraction, but also by “marital affection.”

7. Joannes Andrea, *In quinque Decretalium libros novella commentaria* to X 3.2.6, no. 2; 5 vols. in 4 (Venice: apud Franciscum Franciscum, 1581; reprint ed., Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1963), vol. 3, fol. 8^{rb}, following Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 3.2.6, no. 2 (vol. 3, fol. 6^{rb}): “Fornicarias, dicitur fornicaria, quasi carens forma nitida, unde versus: ‘nec meretrix munda, nec cornix alba sit unda.’ Et dicitur concubina quasi simul cubans. Et meretrix quasi mere, id est vere tricans, vel quasi merens quando non tricat, id est decipit.”

8. Esp. Ulpian in *Dig.* 23.2.43; cf. also Modestinus in *Dig.* 23.2.24 and Marcellinus in *Dig.* 23.2.42. The conventional Roman law citation system is employed throughout this paper. For explanations, see Javier Ochoa Sanz and Aloisio Diez, *Indices titulorum et legum corporis iuris civilis*, Universa Bibliotheca Iuris, Subsidia, vol. 2 (Rome: Commentarium pro Religiosis, 1965), pp. x–xi. The texts of the *Corpus* are cited from the standard critical edition by P. Kruger, T. Mommsen, R. Schoell, and G. Kroll, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1872; many times reprinted). The *glossa ordinaria* will be cited from the Lyons, 1584, edition in 5 vols. The basic definitions set forth in the Roman law texts cited here identify as prostitutes the inmates of brothels, those who offer their bodies for hire in taverns and elsewhere, those who make their living by furnishing sex for pay, and other promiscuous women in general, whether they take remuneration for their services or not. Public display was an important ingredient in the Roman jurists’ notions about prostitution. The medieval jurists tended to identify certain occupations with prostitution and to take the view that actresses, for example, could be presumed to be prostitutes (see *Cod.* 5.4.23.1 *glos. ord. ad v. scenicis*). This was not a view to which the classical jurists necessarily subscribed (see Riccardo Astolfi, “Femina probrosa, concubina, mater solitaria,” *Studia et documenta historiae et iuris* 31 [1965]: 15–60, at 20). The theologians sometimes attempted to define how many men a woman must have intercourse with to merit classification as a prostitute. Bloch, 1:18, mentions opinions ranging from a low minimum of forty to a high minimum of 23,000.

The lawyers used this latter term to signify either an intention eventually to contract marriage or else an emotional quality, not wholly unlike the concept of love.⁹ Marital affection, in fact, was treated in Justinian's legislation as excluding promiscuity, which was essential to the definition of prostitution.¹⁰ Thus concubinage and prostitution were mutually exclusive.

The medieval canonists, although conscious of these Roman law texts, faced a theological problem in adopting wholesale the Roman law definitions. By the lights of Western theology in the twelfth century, all extramarital sexual relations involved fornication, which was a species of sin. Concubinage, from this viewpoint, was an aggravated type of fornication, since it implicitly involved a long-term, continuing, nonmarital sexual relationship.¹¹ On the other hand, some of the decretists preferred to treat concubinage as a type of marriage,¹² a temporary marriage, perhaps, as Bishop Rufinus (d. 1192) called it,¹³ or an informal, clandestine marriage, as the law professor Huguccio (d. 1210) thought of it.¹⁴ The canonistic doctrine on concubinage, in short, was not wholly clear or consistent. Yet although the canonists clearly thought concubinage undesirable, it was less undesirable than prostitution, and they felt it necessary to draw a sharp distinction between prostitution and concubinage. The distinction that they drew was based on the element of promiscuity, not on the element of gain in the relationship.¹⁵

9. *Dig.* 25.7.1, 3, 4; 34.9.16.1; 50.16.144; *Cod.* 5.26. The various senses of the term *maritalis affectio* are discussed by John T. Noonan, Jr., "Marital Affection in the Canonists," *Studia Gratiana* 12 (1967): 482-89.

10. *Nov.* 89.12.4-5; Noonan, p. 489.

11. Adhémar Esmein, *Le mariage en droit canonique*, 2 vols. (Paris: L. Larose & Forcel, 1891; reprint ed., New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 2:114-15; J. A. Brundage, "Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law," *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975): 1-17.

12. *D.* 34 d.a.c. 4.

13. *Summa decretorum* to *D.* 33 d.p.c. 1 and *D.* 34 d.a.c. 7 ad v. *Certum si non talis*, ed. Heinrich Singer (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1902; reprint ed., Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1963), pp. 77, 81.

14. Huguccio, *Summa* to *D.* 34 c. 3 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 3892, fol. 41^{vb}; hereafter cited as B.N.): "Sed concubina dicitur illa uxor quam quis clandestine, non adhibita preterita sollempnitate maritali affectu sibi copulat." Also his *Summa* to *D.* 33 d.p.c. 1 (ibid., fol. 41^{ra}): "Concubina: hic similiter distinctio [*scil.*: ab uxore] nullius est momenti quia potes . . . intelligere concubina uulgariter, sed grauius intelligit concubinam uxorem clandestine post uel ante aliam ductam." Again, *Summa* to *D.* 33 c. 6 ad v. *concubinam relicet* (ibid., fol. 41^{rb}): "Ego uulgariter intelligo, sed grauius intelligit concubinam scilicet uxorem clandestine ductam ante uel post aliam uxorem." See also the *Summa 'Elegantius in iure diuino' seu Coloniensis*, pt. 2, sec. 36, ed. Gérard Fransen and Stephan Kuttner, *Monumenta Iuris Canonici, Corpus Glossatorum*, vol. 1 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969), pp. 58-59.

15. *Summa Coloniensis*, pt. 2, sec. 37 (ed. Fransen and Kuttner, p. 59); *Summa Parisiensis* to *D.* 33 pr., ed. Terence P. McLaughlin (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), p. 32; Joseph Freisen, *Geschichte des kanonischen Eherechts bis zum Verfall der Glossenliteratur*, 2d ed. (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1893; reprint ed., Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1963), p. 58.

When one looks beyond the matter of definition, one finds other anomalies in the ways in which the canonists dealt with prostitution. On the one hand, they flatly disapproved of prostitution. It was morally offensive, theologically repugnant, and ought to be repressed. For these views they could find adequate basis in the Scriptures,¹⁶ in the natural law,¹⁷ and in the Roman law.¹⁸ Yet the medieval canonists' treatment of prostitution was strangely ambivalent. Although they disapproved of it in principle and thought that it should be prohibited, still in practice they were prepared to tolerate prostitution and to justify its toleration in a Christian society.

The origin of this policy of practical toleration seems to go back to Saint Augustine (354–430), who observed that if prostitutes were not available, established patterns of sexual relationship would be endangered. Therefore, he thought, it was better to tolerate prostitution, with all of its associated evils, than to risk the perils which would follow the successful elimination of the harlot from society.¹⁹ In Augustine's attitude one can arguably find the wellsprings of later medieval and even modern attitudes toward prostitution, the notion that it is a necessary evil and that its elimination, if possible at all, would disturb and dislocate the social order.²⁰ Augustine's views on prostitution, as on other matters of sexual conduct, were accepted by theologians as well as by the canonists. Some of them even made the argument that prostitution was necessary for the public good.²¹

16. Esp. in the Mosaic law, e.g.; Deut. 23:17, Lev. 19:29, 21:7, 9. Cf. the scriptural *glossa ordinaria* to Deut. 23:17: "Non erit meretrix a filiabus Israel, et non erit fornicans a filiis Israel. Manifeste prohibet viros et feminas fornicari, etiam cum non alienis conjugibus suis, quando et meretrices esse, et ad eas prohibet accedere, quarum publice venalis est turpitudine" (*Biblia sacra, Pentateuchus cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria, Nicolai Lyrani Postilla et Moralitates* [Lyon, 1545], fol. 358^{ra}). Also Huguccio, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 4 c. 11 (B.N. lat. 3892, fol. 313^{va}): "Ubi dicitur, non erit meretrix de filiabus Israel, neque scortator de filiis Israel . . . cum dicitur 'non erit meretrix,' prohibi meretrices esse; cum enim dictum 'non erit scortator,' prohibi accedere ad meretrices."

17. D. 1 c. 7 *glos. ord.* ad v. *ius naturale*.

18. *Dig.* 48.5.11(10): *Cod.* 1.4.14, 33; *Nov.* 14.1.

19. Augustine, *De ordine*, 2.4, in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844–64), 32:1000, (hereafter cited as *PL*): "Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis, turbaveris omnia libidinibus: constitue matronarum loco, labe ac dedecore dehonestaveris."

20. Bloch, 1:640. See e.g., N. M. Haring, "Peter Cantor's View on Ecclesiastical Excommunication and Its Practical Consequences," *Mediaeval Studies* 11 (1949): 101; Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica* 2^a 2^{ae} q. 10 a. 11; Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 4.1.20, no. 7 (vol. 4, fol. 6^{vb}).

21. Nicholas of Lyra, *Postilla* to Matt., proem., quoted by Gaines Post, *Studies in Medieval Legal Thought: Public Law and the State, 1100–1322* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 553, n. 151. Similar views were current in the sixteenth century (see Joost de Damhouder, *Subhaustationum compendiosa exegesis*, c. 5, in Benvenuto Straccha, *De mercatura decisiones et tractatus varii* [Lyon, 1610; reprint ed., Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1971], p. 763; A. W. Small, *The Cameralists: The Pioneers of German Social Policy* [Chicago, 1909; reprint ed., New York: Burt Franklin, 1967], p. 37).

But there is more to it than this. The practical toleration of prostitution, coupled with the moral condemnation of it, was also rooted in medieval notions about the nature of sexuality itself. The medieval lawyers construed sexual intercourse as a part of the natural law, a notion which stemmed from the Roman jurists.²² Although they knew that sexual urges are strong and universally shared, the canonists were also aware that sexual desire could lead to sin—and usually did. Few adults are not guilty of fornication, they observed,²³ and the ordinary gloss to the *Decretum* noted that people are commonly more inclined to fornicate than to steal.²⁴ The canonists also suspected that sexual desires might be of diabolical origin, a product of original sin and man's subsequent fallen state.²⁵ While they taught that the only legitimate outlet for sexual desire was to be found in marriage, some canonists believed that even in marriage sexual pleasure was sinful.²⁶ The major differences of opinion among them on this matter concerned the question of the sinfulness of intercourse if the reason for the sexual act was enjoyment rather than the procreation of children. Huguccio, an influential twelfth-century canonist, thought that even procreative sex was morally wrong; his more liberal brethren allowed that sexual relations might be morally admissible between married persons when the object of their relations was to beget offspring.²⁷ There was general agreement, however, that excessive intercourse, even within marriage, was sinful, although there was some dispute as to whether the sin involved should be equated with simple fornication or with the more serious sin of adultery.²⁸ Sex outside of marriage, however, was clearly wrong, and intercourse with a prostitute compounded the wrong: it involved the bad use of an evil thing, as the ordinary gloss put it.²⁹

22. *Dig.* 1.1.1; *D.* 1 c. 7; cf. *Summa Parisiensis* to *D.* 1 c. 7 ad v. *coniunctio* (ed. McLaughlin, p. 2); *Summa Coloniensis*, pt. 1, sec. 5 (ed. Fransen and Kuttner, 1:2).

23. *D.* 50 c. 16; *C.* 15 q. 8 c. 1 *glos. ord.* ad v. *caetera*; Huguccio, *Summa* to *D.* 25 d.p.c. 3 ad v. *sine peccato* (B.N. lat. 3892, fol. 29^{va}): "Immo pauci adulti inueniuntur sine carnali delicto, scilicet fornicationis, ut di. 1 quia sanctitus [*D.* 50 c. 16], et ita nullus potest eligi sine peccato, unde patet quod non sic accipitur ibi in epistola Pauli nomen criminis, sed sensus est ibi."

24. *D.* 2 de pen. c. 5 *glos. ord.* ad v. *ex qua minus*.

25. *D.* 13 c. 2 *glos. ord.* ad v. *nervi, testiculorum*; *C.* 32 q. 2 d.p.c. 2 *glos. ord.* ad v. *sine ardore*; cf. Peter Lombard's views in his *Sententiae* 2.20.1 (*PL*, 192:692).

26. *D.* 5 c. 2; *Summa Parisiensis* to *C.* 32 q. 4 c. 14 (ed. McLaughlin, p. 244); see also Rudolf Weigand, "Die Lehre der Kanonisten von den Ehezwecken," *Studia Gratiana* 12 [1967]: 443–78).

27. *D.* 13 d.a.c. 1 *glos. ord.* ad v. *item adversus*; *D.* 13 c. 2 *glos. ord.* ad v. *et quia*; *D.* 25 d. p. c. 3 and *glos. ord.* ad v. *excepto*; *C.* 27 q. 1 c. 20 *glos. ord.* ad v. *peiores*; *C.* 27 q. 2 c. 10 *glos. ord.* ad v. *nōn poterat*; *C.* 33 q. 4 c. 7 *glos. ord.* ad v. *voluptate*; *Summa Parisiensis* to *D.* 5 c. 4 ad v. *prava* (ed. McLaughlin, p. 5). For the view of Saint Thomas, see *Summa Theologica* 3 Supp. q. 49 a. 2 ad 1.

28. *C.* 32 q. 7 c. 11; the *Summa Parisiensis* to *C.* 32 q. 2 d.p.c. 2 ad v. *item immoderatus* (ed. McLaughlin, p. 241), equates it with adultery, while *D.* 13 c. 2 *glos. ord.* ad v. *maiora* treats it as fornication.

29. *C.* 32 q. 1 c. 11 *glos. ord.* ad v. *usus mali*.

The canonists were quite aware that the sexuality of women differed from that of men. For this they found a theological reason: woman was not created in the image of God, as man was.³⁰ The chastity of women, particularly young women, they held, was always suspect,³¹ and women, they observed, are always ready for sexual intercourse. Cardinal Hostiensis illustrated his comments on these points with the story of a priest who was journeying with two girls, one riding in front of him, the other behind. The priest, said Hostiensis, could never swear that the girl in back was a virgin.³² Young girls were thought to be particularly susceptible to the call of sexual desire: the less they knew about it, the sweeter they thought it, as Saint Jerome put it.³³ Since women were considered so susceptible to sexual temptations, great care had to be taken to confine their sexual activities within a properly structured marriage relationship. Women usually sigh when their men are not available, Hostiensis observed,³⁴ and so husbands had a moral obligation to keep their wives sexually satisfied, lest they be tempted to stray to other beds.³⁵ The canonists treated this obligation as a debt, and, like other debts, it was enforceable at law.³⁶ Nonetheless, women commonly

30. X 1.33.12 *glos. ord. ad v. iurisdictionis*: "[S]ed contra videtur quod mulier iudicare non potest. . . . Praeterea mulier non debet habere talem potestatem, quia non est facta ad imaginem Dei, sed vir, qui est imago et gloria Dei, et mulier debet subesse viro, et quasi famula viri esse, cum vir caput sit mulieris, et non e converso. . . ." Cf. Andrea, *Novella* to X 1.33.12, no. 6 (vol. 1, fol. 267^{vb}): "Et ibi, imago: sicut enim a deo procedit omnis creatura, sic et ab Adam omnis humana et ab eo solo, et non ab Eva sola, cum ipsa Eva processerit ab Adam et sic ipsa non est imago Dei in creatione."

31. X 3.32.18 *glos. ord. ad v. talis etas de qua suspicio*.

32. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 4.13.11, no. 1 (vol. 4, fol. 27^{ra}): ". . . hoc ex parte mulieris, cuius vas semper paratum est. secundum Gof. Unde et consuevit dici vulgariter adeo magnum rostrum habet pericula sicut pica. Exemplum de sacerdote qui portabat duas filias, una ante se et aliam retro, qui dixit, quod de illa, quem retro deferebat, nullatenus iuraret, quod virgo esset; secus in viro, qui non potest tanto tempore pervenire, salvo eo, quod narrat Gregorius in dialogo, de puero ix annorum qui impregnavit nutricem suam. Etiam hoc idem reperi ego de puero xi vel xii annorum in castro sancti Michaelis systaricensis diocesis. Et idem legitur de Salamone, scilicet quod in xi anno genuit filium." Andrea, *Novella* to X 4.13.11, no. 5 (vol. 4, fol. 42^{vb}) follows Hostiensis virtually word for word.

33. Quoted in C. 27 q. 1 c. 2 *glos. ord. ad v. viae sunt*: "Dicit Hieronymus: Libido in virginibus maiorem patitur famem, dum dulcius esse putant quod nesciunt."

34. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 3.34.7, no. 15 (vol. 3, fol. 127^{rb}): "Suspira. Loquitur per similitudinem, cum enim mulier, propter recessum et absentem viri consueverit suspirare, vult dicere quod idem facit Trecen. ecclesia, que est sponsa sua, supra de translatione episcopi ca. ii [X 1.7.2] et repete. in contrarium allegabant."

35. Thus, e.g., C. 33 q. 5 c. 3, 4, 11, d.p.c. 20; D. 5 c. 4 *glos. ord. ad v. ablactetur*. This was an especially acute problem for Crusaders, whose extended absence might expose their wives to sexual temptations. On the canonists' treatment of this problem, see my study, "The Crusader's Wife: A Canonistic Quandary," *Studia Gratiana* 12 (1967): 425-42.

36. This usage is common form, based on 1 Cor. 7:3-6 (see Esmein, 1:84, 110; 2:8-13; John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic*

yielded to stray sexual desires, for a variety of reasons: they were overly trusting and put faith in the dubious promises of unworthy men; they were ignorant, sometimes so ignorant that they were unaware that adultery was sinful; or they might be separated from their spouses and despair of their return.³⁷ Moreover, they were fickle and inconstant creatures by nature.³⁸ They were soft of heart,³⁹ moreover, and susceptible to sensual stimulation, which easily led them into sexual sins.⁴⁰ In addition, the canonists were aware that females reach the age of sexual readiness earlier than males: girls are *viripotent*es from age twelve, according to Hostiensis, who cited the Roman law to prove his point.⁴¹ They reach sexual maturity earlier than males, he thought, because they are warmer and quicker by nature than men and hence attain their natural perfection at an earlier age. Hostiensis also observed, rather ungallantly, that women are like weeds, which mature earlier than desirable plants—he quotes Plato to prove this point—but also die earlier.⁴²

Despite all these handicaps—and one might have thought from some of the discussions that chastity in a woman was virtually impossible—women were nonetheless expected to observe a more austere standard of sexual conduct than were men, as at least some of the canonists were quite aware. They taught a double standard of sexual morality: they were aware of it and they had reasons for it, mainly

Theologians and Canonists [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1965], pp. 283–85). Peter Herde, *Audientia litterarum contradictarum: Untersuchungen über die päpstlichen Justizbriefe und die päpstliche Delegationsgerichtsbarkeit vom 13. bis zum Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols., Bibliothek des deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom, vols. 31–32 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1970), 2:304, gives the form for delegation of trial on such a complaint.

37. Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 4.15.6, no. 6 (vol. 4, fol. 33^{ra}).

38. Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 5.40.10 (vol. 5, fol. 125^{vb}).

39. Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 3.33.2, no. 10 (vol. 3, fol. 124^{rb}).

40. C. 27 q. 1 c. 4; C. 32 q. 5 c. 11 *glos. ord.* ad v. *aliam*; Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 2.13.10, no. 13 (vol. 2, fol. 51^{rb}).

41. Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 4.2.1, no. 3 (vol. 4, fol. 10^{ra}): “Duodecim vero anni in muliere expectantur [*scil.*: ad contrahendum matrimonium], infra eodem continebatur [X 4.2.6]. Unde versus: ‘Iam matura thoro plenis adoleverat annis’ [cf. Aeneid 7.53; 12.428]. Nunc ergo dicitur viripotens, ff. ut in possessionem legatorum, 1. pen. [Dig. 36.4.16] et si quandoque ante hos annos cognoscatur, sed tunc dicitur immatura, ff. de iniuriis, si stuprum [Dig. 47.10.25].”

42. Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 4.2.4, no. 2 (vol. 4, fol. 11^{rb}): “Si quaeretur ratio quare mulier citius quam homo pubescat? Respondeo quia ingeniosior et calidior est, unde et citius impetrat venam etatis, quam masculus: quia mulier in 18 anno masculus vero in 20, C. de his qui veniam aetatis impetraverunt, omnes adolescentes [Cod. 2.44(45).2]; sed et naturaliter debilior est sexus muliebris, unde communiter minus vivit: quia et minus habet caloris naturalis, ideo quanto citius finitur, tanto citius naturaliter perfici debet. Et sicut etiam dicunt aliqui naturales in xii anno omnino apta est mulier ad concipiendum. Plato vero dixit, quod hoc ideo est: quia citius crescit mala herba, quam bona, sed et dici potest quod facilius est mulieri pati quam homini agere, unde et semper mulier est parata, non idem in homine. . . .”

theological.⁴³ Modesty, they taught, was woman's glory.⁴⁴ Therefore a woman who was sexually desirous and ardent, who did not blush at sex, was at heart a whore, though she need not legally be classified as one so long as she remained faithful to her husband.⁴⁵ The adulteress, on the other hand, was more reprehensible than her partner in sin, and sexual promiscuity was considered more detestable in women than in men, according to Joannes Teutonicus in the ordinary gloss on the *Decretum*.⁴⁶ Even within the marriage relationship a woman should not use the sexual wiles of a prostitute, and a matron who dressed like a tart could legally be classed as one.⁴⁷

As for male sexuality, it was no secret to the canonists that men have a natural appetite for carnal relations with women.⁴⁸ The lawyers were also aware that casual conversation with members of the opposite sex might easily lead to greater intimacy,⁴⁹ an outcome which became even more likely when conversation was enlivened by intemperate drinking.⁵⁰

43. Innocent IV, *Apparatus toto orbe celebrandus super V libris Decretalium* to X 1.21.5, sec. 3 (Frankfurt, 1570), fol. 112^v: "Sed quare magis exigitur in uxore quam in viro? Nam maritus corrupte promoveri non potest, 34 dist. curandum [D. 34 c. 4] praecipimus. Sicut si vir: ille autem qui post uxorem habuit concubinam promoveri potest, 34 dist. Fraternitatis [D. 34 c. 7]. Ugolinus dicit, quod vir significat ecclesiam, quae saepe adulteratur exorbitando a fide et ita non deest significatio sacramenti, licet vir adulteretur; uxor autem significat Christum, qui nunquam ecclesiam dimisit: ipse enim est fons vivus, cui non communicat alienus. Ego credo quod vir significat Christum quo sibi copulavit synagogam, et post ecclesiam, et ideo non nocet, si vir dividit carnem suam in plures; uxor autem ecclesiam, quae semper virgo permansit saltem mente: unde despondi enim vos uni viro, et cap. 27 quaestio i nuptiarum [C. 27 q. 1 c. 41]; unde si uxor in plures carnem suam dividat deficit in ea sacramentum, 33 dist. Valentino [D. 33 c. 20]."

44. Andrea, *Novella* to X, prol., no. 7 (vol. 1, fol. 6^{ra}).

45. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 4.13.11, no. 2 (vol. 4, fol. 27^{ra}), followed *ad litteram* by Andrea, *Novella* to X 4.13.11, no. 1: "Carnis stimulis: frons meretricis sibi facta est, noluit erubescere. Hic. iii b., quamvis nec propter hoc meretrix sit, immo caste vivit, dummodo ab aliis absteineat, 31 di. nicena [D. 31 c. 12], alioquin non excusaretur, licet diceret se rem naturalem passam esse, in Auth. de restitutionibus et ea quae parit xi mense, sec. unum siquidem, col. iiii [Nov. 39.1, 1 in c. = *Auth.* 4.6.1]; neque pretextu paupertatis, ut patet in his que no. supra eodem distinctionem."

46. C. 12 q. 2 d.p.c. 58 *glos. ord.* ad v. *capitali*: "Sed numquid servus potest accusare dominam suam si cum alio servo adulteratur? Respondeo quod non, quia de proprio tantum servo; similiter nec domina virum suum potest accusare, si cum ancilla sua iacet vel cum aliena, cum hoc cautum non invenio hoc immo, quia detestabilius est hoc crimen in muliere quam in viro. Jo. Maledicit Jo., quia accusari potest mulier, et vir, si cum ancilla sua fornicetur, aut femina si adulterium committat, ut extra de divor., ex litteris [X 4.19.5]. B."

47. Rufinus, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 2 d.p.c. 2 (ed. Singer, p. 479); X 5.39.25 *glos. ord.* ad v. *meretricali*.

48. E.g., Huguccio, *Summa* to D. 1 c. 7 ad v. *ut uiri et femine coniunctio* (B.N. lat. 3892, fol. 2^{va}): "Mouetur enim homo quodam naturali appetitu sensualitatis ut carnaliter commisceatur femine."

49. *Cod.* 5.27.1.1 *glos. ord.* ad v. *venenis*: "Ut veneno occiditur corpus, sic animas istarum conversatione. Accursius."

50. *Cod.* 9.9.28(29) *glos. ord.* ad v. *intemperantia vina*: "Id est ex quibus oritur intemperantia et incontinentia unde illud, 'Nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria.' [Eph. 5:18] Venter enim mero affluens, facile despumat in libidinem" (cf. Eccles. 19:2).

So rampant was male attraction to women that the ordinary gloss to the *Decretum* observed that some scholars even went to church services more in order to ogle the women who attended than to worship God.⁵¹ It was obvious to the canonists, too, that religion and sex did not mix well together: a man who had sexual gratifications readily available could not give his whole attention to God.⁵² This being so, clerics were especially exhorted not to have dealings of any kind, even the most innocuous conversations, with women whose morals were suspect. Those who did so were liable to excommunication.⁵³ Still, the canonists cautioned their students to give a benevolent interpretation to the association of clerics with members of the opposite sex. A cleric found embracing a woman is presumed to be blessing her, according to the ordinary gloss⁵⁴—to which a later commentator jestingly added: “God save us from such blessings!”⁵⁵

Given such views of male and female sexuality, with a far higher standard of sexual conduct demanded from women than from men, it may seem somewhat surprising to find that the lawyers generally, both civilians and canonists, wasted very little time detailing punishments to be dealt out to prostitutes. The prostitute, in the eyes of the canonists, was culpable, but not severely culpable, for her conduct. She was, after all, simply acting in accord with her sexual character, as the canonists viewed it. When it came to punishments, they gave most of their attention to the penalties to be inflicted upon those who used the prostitute's services and upon the pimps, procurers, and brothel keepers who made those services regularly available.⁵⁶

The canonists saw financial need as one root cause of prostitution,

51. C. 24 q. 1 c. 28 *glos. ord.* ad v. *sed suas*: “Argumentum contra scholares, qui vadunt ad ecclesiam ut videant dominas: quia ibi potius attendunt causam suam quam Dei.”

52. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 2.23.15, no. 3 (vol. 2, fol. 124^{va}).

53. X 3.2.2 (= *Comp. I* 3.2.3); cf. D. 81 c. 22.

54. C. 11 q. 3 c. 14 *glos. ord.* ad v. *sinistrum*: “Si ergo clericus amplectitur mulierem, interpretabitur quod causa benedicendi eam hoc faciat, ut 96 dist. in scripturis [D. 96 c. 8].”

55. Hippolytus de Marsiliis, *Tractatus de fideiusoribus*, in Straccha, p. 689: “Et facit glossa in ca. absit 11 quaest. 3 [C. 11 q. 3 c. 14], quae dixit, quod si clericus osculatur mulierem, praesumitur causa benedictionis hoc facere, quam glossa ad hoc refert Angelus de Aretinis in tractatu maleficio in verbo, *Che hai adulterata a la mia donna*, versi, an patri liceat: ubi iocose subdit, quod a tali benedictione clericorum liberet nos Deus.”

56. Punishment for those who frequented harlots, especially for clerics who did so, is frequently prescribed: e.g., D. 28 c. 9; D. 33 c. 6; D. 51 c. 5; Rufinus, *Summa* to D. 33 pr. (ed. Singer, p. 77); D. 32 *glos. ord.* ad v. *audiet*; Gulielmus Durantis, *Speculum iuris*, lib. 4, partic. 4, De adulteriis et stupro, no. 5; 2 vols. in 1 (Frankfurt a/M.: Sumptibus heredum A. Wechli & J. Gymnici, 1592), 2:477. The law dealing with pimps, procurers, and brothel keepers is extensive. See, *inter alia*, Dig. 3.2.4.2, 13.7.24.3, 48.5.2.6; *Cod.* 1.4.12, 14, 33; 4.56.1.2, 3; 7.6.1.4; 9.9.2; 11.41.6; *Nov.* 14 (= *Auth.* coll. 3 tit. 1); Rolandus, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 1 c. 4 (ed. Thaner, p. 60); Goffredus de Trani, *Summa super titulis Decretalium* to X 5.16.4 (Lyon: Roman Morin, 1519; reprint ed., Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1968), fo. 216^{ra}; X 5.16.3 *glos. ord.* ad v. *reus sit*; Hostiensis, *Summa aurea una cum summariis et adnotationibus Nicolai Superantii*, lib. 5, De adulteriis et stupro, no. 14 (Lyon, 1537; reprint ed., Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962), fol. 245^{ra}.

but they did not consider poverty or economic necessity as mitigating circumstances.⁵⁷ No matter how hungry she might be or how desperate her situation, a woman was not justified in turning to prostitution in order to earn even the necessities of life.⁵⁸ Although poverty and desperation might excuse a man who committed theft, for example, and under certain circumstances even homicide could be justified, the canonists admitted no circumstances to excuse fornication and prostitution.⁵⁹ Nor was a natural craving for sexual gratification a mitigating circumstance;⁶⁰ some theologians indeed taught that the more pleasure a prostitute derived from her sexual encounters, the more serious was her offense.⁶¹ Some authors tended to link prostitution with greed and saw an inordinate desire for wealth and opulence as a cause of harlotry, but this was not a theme on which the legal writers had much to say.⁶² The only mitigating situation which the canonists would admit for the prostitute occurred if the girl had been forced into prostitution by her parents or someone who exercised legitimate control over her actions.⁶³ In such a situation, the prostitute herself was not accountable for her actions, and those who forced her into a life of sin bore the guilt for any actions which she was forced to perform.⁶⁴

Perhaps the principal disability felt by the medieval prostitute was her inability to attain any form of significant social status. This she shared in common with her predecessors in Roman antiquity.⁶⁵ It has

57. X 4.1.20 *glos. ord. ad v. publicas*; the opinions of Laurentius and Vicentius are given by Stephan Kuttner, *Kanonistische Schuldlehre von Gratian bis auf die Dekretalen Gregors IX*, *Studi e testi*, vol. 64 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1935; reprint ed., 1961), p. 298, n. 1.

58. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 4.1.20, no. 6, and 4.19.4, no. 3 (vol. 4, fol. 6^{vb}, 43^{vb}).

59. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 5.18.3, nos. 2–4, 9 (vol. 5, fol. 55^{ra-rb}).

60. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 4.19.4, no. 3 (vol. 4, fol. 43^{vb}).

61. Leopold Brandl, *Die Sexualethik des heiligen Albertus Magnus: Eine Moralggeschichtliche Untersuchung*, *Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie*, vol. 2 (Regensburg: F. Putest, 1955), p. 244; Dennis Doherty, *The Sexual Doctrine of Cardinal Cajetan*, *Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie*, vol. 12 (Regensburg: F. Putest, 1966), pp. 102–3.

62. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2^a 2^{ae} q. 118 a. 8 ad 4; Jacques de Vitry, *Historia occidentalis*, c. 18, ed. John F. Hinnebusch, *Spicilegium Friburgense*, vol. 17 (Friburg: University Press, 1972), p. 99. Some modern writers have suggested that avarice is a factor in modern marriage and that the principal economic difference between marriage and prostitution lies in the nature of the return: prostitution involves the rendering of sexual services for a specified fee, while marriage provides continuous support in return for assured availability of sexual gratification (*Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society*, ed. Max Rheinstein, *Twentieth Century Legal Philosophy Series*, vol. 6 [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954], p. 134).

63. *Dig.* 13.7.24.3; *Cod.* 1.4.12, 14, 33; 4.56.1–3; 7.6.1.4; 11.41.6; Azo, *Summa super Codicem* to *Cod.* 11.41, *Corpus glossatorum iures civilis*, vol. 2 (Pavia: Per Bernardinum et Ambrosius fratres de Rouellis, 1506; reprint ed., Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1966), p. 437.

64. *Summa Parisiensis* to C. 32 q. 5 c. 1 ad v. *tolerabilis* (ed. McLaughlin, p. 245).

65. Hans Herter, "Die Soziologie der antiken Prostitution im Lichte des heidnischen und christlichen Schrifttums," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 3 (1960): 70–110; *Dig.* 9.9.28(29) *glos. ord. ad v. et stupri et adulterii*; *Dig.* 23.2.47.

been suggested that even in modern societies the harlot's loss of social status remains one of the major disabilities of the prostitute's role, and that the fees she receives should be interpreted as compensation not only for her sexual services but also for her impaired social standing.⁶⁶ Certainly the medieval canonists considered the harlot's status debased: it was so vile, according to Hostiensis, that she was not even required to obey the law—the inference being that she was beneath the law's contempt.⁶⁷ She was so base that she was canonically debarred from accusing others of crimes, according to one conciliar canon,⁶⁸ save for the crime of simony, which the canonists considered a particularly depraved offense.⁶⁹ The Roman law doctrine that prohibited a harlot from inheriting property was still considered applicable law in the Middle Ages.⁷⁰ Likewise, the harlot who had charges brought against her was not allowed to answer them in person but had to employ a representative to respond to them, just as did madmen and monsters.⁷¹

When it came to dealing with the property and property rights of prostitutes, the canonists followed very closely the doctrine of the classical Roman lawyers, which was still current law in many secular jurisdictions in the Middle Ages. Money given to a prostitute could not be reclaimed by the donor, according to this doctrine: the client had no right to take back the money he had paid for her sexual services. She, for her part, committed no wrong in accepting the money. What she did in return for her fee might be wrong, but the taking of money for it was no crime.⁷² The customer who paid the harlot her fee might be held wrong to give money to her; but her acceptance was perfectly legal.⁷³ Once she had taken the fee, it became her property outright and her rights to it were legally valid, a validity which at least one medieval lawyer sustained because of the harlot's "usefulness."⁷⁴ Cardinal Cajetan, incidentally,

66. Vern L. Bullough, "Problems and Methods for Research in Prostitution and the Behavioral Sciences," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 1 (1965): 247.

67. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 3.30.23, no. 3 (vol. 3, fol. 100^{vb}) and 4.1.20, no. 5 (vol. 4, fol. 6^{vb}); *Cod.* 9.9.28(29).

68. C. 4 q. 1 c. 1.

69. C. 6 q. 1 d.a.c. 1, *glos. ord.* ad v. *quod autem*: "In simonia quilibet auditur accusans contra laicum, etiam meretrix, ut 89 dist. si quis papa [*recte*: D. 79 c. 2] et ext. de simonia, tanta [X 5.3.7] . . . secus si accusatus sit clericus et bonae famae. . ."

70. *Dig.* 29.1.41.1; 37.12.3 pr.

71. X 2.1.14 *glos. ord.* ad v. *factum proponat*: "Item universitas per alium respondet. . . Item furiosi, prodigi, et mulier luxuriosa, ff. de curtoribus furioso, l. et mulieri [*Dig.* 27.10.15]. Ber."

72. *Dig.* 12.5.4, quoting Ulpian, who relies on the doctrines of Labeo and Marcellus in this passage.

73. Huguccio, *Summa* to C. 14 q. 5 d.a.c. 1 (B.N. lat. 3892, fol. 119^{ra}): "Unde dicit lex meretrix turpiter facere in eo quod est meretrix, sed nec turpiter accipit cum sit meretrix, ut ff. de con. ob tur. c. idem esti quotiens [*Dig.* 12.5.4.2]"; cf. D. 86 c. 7 *glos. ord.* ad v. *talibus*; Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 3.30.23, no. 7 (vol. 3, fol. 100^{vb}).

74. Azo, *Summa Codicis* to *Cod.* 4.7 (p. 115): "Turpitudinem enim meretricis non dignatur lex respicere propter utilitatem sui, ut infra ad legem iuliam de adulteriis, l. que

stipulated that a prostitute, in order to be entitled lawfully to retain what she earned, must charge only a just price for her services. He did not specify how this was to be determined. He also considered it unlawful for a prostitute to practice deception in the display of her wares.⁷⁵

If a whore was legally entitled to retain what had been paid to her, she was on shakier ground in seeking fulfillment of promises made to her. The customer who paid in cash could not reclaim what he had paid to her. The wiler customer, who paid in promises of future gifts, could renege on his promises and the prostitute could not legally secure enforcement of them.⁷⁶

Another vexing question concerned the liability of prostitutes for the payment of the tithe. On this matter opinions were divided. Some canonists held that since the harlot lawfully possessed the money she received for her services, she must pay tithes from her earnings.⁷⁷ Hostiensis, however, thought otherwise: the earnings of the whore, although lawfully held, were nonetheless the wages of sin, and tithes could not legally be collected from them.⁷⁸ Saint Thomas (1224–74), as usual, distinguished: the harlot must be required to pay the tithe from her earnings—but the church might not accept the payment until she had reformed.⁷⁹

If the harlot's liability for payment of the tithe was disputed, her

ad adulterium [*Cod.* 9.9.28(29)], nec obstat quod legitur ff. de furtis, l. verum [*Dig.* 47.2.25], quia ibi non meretricis turpitudinem spectat licet eius qui accessit ad eam."

75. Doherty, p. 102, no. 35.

76. *Cod.* 5.3.5 glos. ord. ad v. non potes; Azo, *Summa Codicis* to *Cod.* 4.7 (p. 115).

77. The solution of Joannes Teutonicus, *Apparatus* to *Comp.* III 3.23. 5 (= X 3.30.28) is particularly ingenious: "Set numquid meretrix uel ystrio dabit decimam? Non uidetur, quia ut dixi honorandus est dominus de iustis laboribus, et decime tantum de licitis dantur, ut supra eodem ex transmissa lib. ii [*Comp.* II 3.17.7 = X 3.30.23]. Item quia scriptum est non accipies mercedem prostibuli [Deut. 23:18] et est arg. ad hoc xliii q. v elemosina [c. 7] et xxxii q. iiii sic non sunt [c. 10]. Nam illicite quesita non sunt in bonis nostris, ut ff. pro socio cum duobus sec. ult. [*Dig.* 17.2.52.18]. Ad hoc dicunt quidam quod a talibus non est sumenda decima, ne ecclesiauidetur approbare delictum eorum, arg. ad hoc xxiii q. i Paratus, in fine [c. 2], ff. de inoffic. testa, si pars, in fine [*Dig.* 5.2.10]. Alii dicunt quod decima sumenda est potius ab eis quam apud eos remaneat, arg. xxii q. i. Considera [c. 8]. Melius dicas quod si transfertur dominium in aliquos ita quod non competit repetitio licet ille peccent, tamen tenentur dare decimas. Et licet ecclesia petat decimam a talibus, non tamen approbat officium eorum quia conuenit eos tamquam quemlibet possessorem lucris, unde de iustis spoliis danda est decima exemplo Abrahe, ut xxiii q. v. Dicat [c. 25]. Jo" (Admont, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 22, fol. 209^r. I wish to thank Professor Kenneth J. Pennington, Jr., for calling this passage to my attention and for his transcription of the manuscript). Cf. the argument of Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, 9 vols. (Venice: Apud Iuntas, 1588) to X 3.30.23 (vol. 6, fol. 231^{rb}).

78. Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 3.30.23, no. 2 (vol. 3, fol. 100^{vb}): "De omnibus quae licite, etc. Ergo uidetur quod de illicite acquisitis non tenetur quis solvere decimam, ar. i q. i Non est putanda [c. 27] et sic meretrix de meretricio suo ad decimam non tenetur: Deut. xxiii, 'Non offeres mercedem protibuli nec pretium carnis in domum domini Dei tui [Deut. 23:18]; Prouer. iii, 'Honora dominum tuum de tua substantia' [Prov. 3:9]."

79. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2^a 2^{ae} q. 87 a. 2 ad 2.

ability to give freewill alms was likewise in doubt: most canonistic authorities agreed with Huguccio that the church could not accept alms from ill-gotten goods, such as the gains derived from usury, the earnings of actors, the stipends of *mathematici*, the profits of extortioners, or the fees of prostitutes.⁸⁰ Others distinguished between various types of ill-gotten gains, commonly on the grounds that some were wrongly acquired by force or the threat of force (e.g., the profits of robbers, extortioners, or advocates, who prey on the poor and ignorant), while other ill-gotten gains were derived from more-or-less generous, if misdirected impulses; the earnings of prostitutes and actors fell into this class.⁸¹ The ordinary gloss distinguished on still other grounds. According to this view, alms should not be given from ill-gotten gains if ownership of the goods was retained by the original giver, with mere possession passing into the hands of the receiver but if both ownership and possession passed to the recipient (as was the case with fees given to prostitutes) then alms could be given and received from such goods.⁸²

Hostiensis posed a particularly tantalizing case—that of the Crusading harlot. What would the legal situation be if a whore took the Cross? She would surely be followed by many men, since nothing is stronger than love; and this would clearly bolster the defensive forces of the Holy Land. Should the Crusading harlot therefore be obliged to fulfill a Crusading vow? Hostiensis thought not: the motivation of her followers, after all, was not likely to be a spiritual one. Should she then be allowed to redeem her vow by making an offering for the defense of the Holy Places? Hostiensis thought that this, too, would be unacceptable.⁸³ The appropriate conclusion seemed to be that harlots should not take Crusading vows.

Although prostitutes were acknowledged to have some property rights, their power to protect those rights was extremely limited, so far as the canonists were concerned. A prostitute could not denounce a criminal, nor were the courts to hear a harlot's complaints about wrongs done to her.⁸⁴ This attitude was consistent with the teaching of the Roman

80. Huguccio, *Summa* to C. 14 q. 5 d.a.c. 1 (B.N. lat. 3892, fol. 119^{ra}): "Et indistincte dicunt quod in nulla re illicite acquisita potest fieri elemosina, ergo nec de acquisita per furtum, uel per rapinam, uel per usuram, uel symoniam, uel lusum, uel meretricium, uel per opus ystrionicum, uel mathematicum, uel per extorsionem sicut sepe fit a rusticis, et his ius ar. infra eodem questione elemosina [C. 14 q. 5 c. 7]." Cf. the *glossa ordinaira* to Deut. 23:18 ad v. *non offeres* (fol. 358^{ra}): "De mercede meretricis videtur repulisse, quia superius prohibuit esse meretricem de filiabus Israel, aut quenque filiorum Israel uti meretrice, et ne quis posse hoc expiari si aliquid in templum offeret, dicendum fuit, quod domino abominatio sit."

81. Rufinus, *Summa* to C. 14 q. 5 pr. (ed. Singer, pp. 342–43).

82. D. 90 c. 2 *glos. ord.* ad v. *dona*, ad fin.; C. 1 q. 1 c. 27 *glos. ord.* ad v. *ex illicitis rebus*; C. 14 q. 5 d.a.c. 1 *glos. ord.* ad v. *quod vero*.

83. Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, lib. 3 tit. De voto et voti redemptione, no. 11 (fol. 177^{rb}).

84. X 5.1.20 and *glos. ord.* ad v. *concubinarios*.

lawyers.⁸⁵ Alberto dei Gandini (ca. 1245–ca. 1310) discussed this situation in the context of a case which is said to have occurred at Mantua. One Armanius, clearly no gentleman, entered the house of a woman and attempted to have intercourse with her, against her will. Charged with this offense, Armanius proved in his own defense that the woman he had assaulted was a public prostitute, of bad condition, ill famed, and known by many men. Indeed, Armanius himself was one of her regular customers and frequently had intercourse with her. Under these circumstances, could he be punished for attempting to rape her? The subtlety of the question taxed the wits of lesser lawyers, and a famous jurist, Dino Mugellano, was consulted on the matter. Dino gave it as his opinion that if it were proved that the woman had put her body up for hire, then Armanius could not be punished for an attempt to rape her.⁸⁶ Alberto cited another case: an unnamed man broke down the door of a harlot's house, *libidinis causa*. Thieves subsequently entered the house through the broken door and made off with the furnishings. Was the sex-crazed door breaker liable for damages for the stolen goods? Alberto thought not—his motive was lust, not theft and he could not be held responsible for what he had not intended.⁸⁷

If whores abounded everywhere in medieval Europe—and the available evidence strongly suggests that they did—one problem which faced public authorities was how to distinguish them visibly and clearly from respectable women. The canonists tended to think that distinctive dress was the best solution to the problem.⁸⁸ Municipal authorities commonly reverted to ancient practice by sequestering their prostitutes in specified portions of their cities and establishing quasi-public control over the practice of their trade.⁸⁹ The whores of Paris are said even to have founded a guild—perhaps in an attempt to restrain competition, as other guilds commonly did.⁹⁰

Attempts at regulation, identification, and isolation were made easier for the authorities by the fact that prostitution in medieval Europe was most commonly practiced in the setting of a brothel.⁹¹ Streetwalkers were not unknown, but brothels were everywhere, even in small towns

85. *Dig.* 47.2.39; 47.10.15.15; *Cod.* 9.9.22.

86. Alberto dei Gandini, *Tractatus de maleficiis*, ed. H. Kantorowicz, in *Albertus Gandinus und das Strafrecht der Scholastik*, 2 vols. (Berlin: J. Gutentag, 1907–26), 2:360–61. In contrast, the monarchs of Sicily protected prostitutes in their kingdom from such attacks (see Frederick II, *Constitutiones regni Siciliae* [= *Liber Augustalis*] 1.21[24], ed. J. L. A. Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatice Friderici II*, 6 vols. in 12 [Paris: Plon, 1852–61; reprint ed., Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1963], 4, pt. 1: 23–24.

87. Gandini, 2:214.

88. E.g., Hostiensis, *Lectura to X* 5.6.15, no. 4 (vol. 5, fol. 32^v).

89. Bullough, *History of Prostitution*, pp. 113–14; Richard Lewinsohn, *A History of Sexual Customs*, trans. A. Mayco (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958), p. 145.

90. Bullough, *History of Prostitution*, p. 112.

91. Bloch (n. 3 above), 1:690.

and large-sized villages.⁹² In many towns the local brothels were acknowledged civic corporations, regulated minutely by local ordinances, even supervised by public officials: often enough the local executioner doubled as supervisor of whorehouses in his off hours.⁹³

Despite sporadic local efforts to outlaw brothels and prostitution,⁹⁴ whorehouses apparently flourished everywhere, often under the guise of bathhouses and frequently under the supervision of barbers.⁹⁵ For this reason, canonists frequently warned Christians in general and clerics in particular not to frequent bathhouses, since they were apt to be morally dangerous.⁹⁶ Bathhouses and barbershops might not be the only occasions of sin. Jacques de Vitry, writing in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, gives a vivid description of the Parisian prostitutes of his day. They were everywhere in the city, soliciting passing clerics to sample their delights and crying out, "Sodomite!" after those who passed up the invitation. Both a brothel and a scholar's hall might occupy the same premises: while the master delivered his lectures in an upper room, the trollops exercised their trade below. It is likely that the twain sometimes met, as the arguments between the harlots and their pimps rose to mingle with the disputations of the schools.⁹⁷

Bold and brazen though she might be, the medieval law viewed the prostitute as a largely powerless person, socially degraded, but in actual practice tolerated and allowed to exercise some limited property rights in her earnings. Still she could redeem her situation through reform. For this there were illustrious examples—had not Jesus himself said to the Pharisees of his time that repentant tax collectors and whores would take precedence over them in the kingdom of heaven?⁹⁸ And the example of Saint Mary Magdalene demonstrated that the believing and repentant harlot could achieve salvation.⁹⁹ In some circumstances the

92. Ibid., 1:740–45, lists seventy-five towns and cities in Germany which had brothels between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

93. Ibid., 1:670. For a more detailed account of a slightly later period, see Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 195, 203–6.

94. E.g., Jean de Joinville, *The Life of St. Louis*, trans. René Hague (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), chap. 36, sec. 171, p. 66; Gandini, 1:243–44 (Urk. 30), 252–54 (Urk. 35); Bullough, *History of Prostitution*, p. 113. There were older—and equally ineffectual—precedents (see Nov. 14.1 [= *Auth. coll.* 3, tit. 1]).

95. Bullough, *History of Prostitution*, p. 115; also his *The Development of Medicine as a Profession: The Contribution of the Medieval University to Modern Medicine* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1966), p. 88; Lewinsohn, p. 148. Bloch, 1:747–50, gives a lengthy—and eloquent—list of words used to designate brothels in the middle ages.

96. D. 81 c. 28 glos. ord. ad v. omnino; C. 24 q. 1 c. 24 glos. ord. ad v. balneas; Rufinus, *Summa* to D. 81 c. 20 (ed. Singer, p. 172).

97. *Historia occidentalis*, c. 7 (ed. Hinnebusch, p. 91); cf. the harlots at the door of the tent of meeting: 1 Sam. 2:22 (= 1 Kings 2:22).

98. Matt. 21:31–33.

99. Luke 7.37.

church stood ready to assist girls to leave a life of sin. Involuntary prostitutes (i.e., girls who had been sold into prostitution by their parents or masters) could petition the local bishop or other authority to liberate them from their carnal bondage.¹⁰⁰ Other harlots could also look to the church for help in efforts at self-reform. Still the canonists recognized realistically that the chances of successful reform were slim and that a repentant strumpet might continually be tempted to take up her former life.¹⁰¹

Nonetheless the hope of reform was there. Two major avenues of reform were contemplated. The favorite with most reformers was to induce the repentant harlot to enter the religious life, to become a nun. From at least the twelfth century onward, religious houses were established with the particular purpose of serving as havens for reformed prostitutes.¹⁰² In 1224 an effort began to create a special religious order of penitential nuns to harbor reformed whores, and in 1227 Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) gave the highest ecclesiastical sanction to the Order of Saint Mary Magdalene, which subsequently established convents in numerous cities. The sisters wore a white habit, whence they were sometimes known as “the White Ladies.”¹⁰³ Subsequent official patronage and encouragement was given to the Magdalenes by the fourteenth-century popes.¹⁰⁴ Similar convents, not necessarily affiliated with the Magdalene order, received endowment and support from monarchs, such as the pious Louis IX of France (1226–70), who was subsequently elevated to the altars of the church for this and other saintly actions.¹⁰⁵

For the harlot who wished to reform but who was not inclined to embrace the religious life, there was another alternative: marriage. The canonists required, however, that a number of conditions be fulfilled before a prostitute might marry. In this area of the law, a gradual change of attitude and policy took place. The doctrine of the early church had tended to discourage such marriages: one of the canons in Gratian's *Decretum* characterized the man who kept a whore as his wife as idiotic and unreasonable.¹⁰⁶ Even the reformed prostitute, who had done solemn public penance for her sins, might be forbidden to marry,

100. Durantis, *Speculum iuris*, lib. 4, partic. 4, De adulteriis et stupro, no. 8–9 (2:377) gives examples of such petitions.

101. D. 34 d.p.c. 8; C. 32 q. 1 d.p.c. 13.

102. *Historia occidentalis*, c. 8 (ed. Hinnebusch, pp. 99–100); Milton R. Gutsch, “A Twelfth-Century Preacher—Fulk of Neuilly,” in *The Crusades and Other Essays in Honor of Dana C. Munro*, ed. L. J. Paetow (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1928), pp. 190–91; Bullough, *History of Prostitution*, p. 115.

103. Max Heimbucher, *Die Orden und Kongregationen der katholischen Kirche*, 3d ed., 2 vols. (Munich: F. Schöningh, 1965) 1:646–48.

104. Bernard Guillemain, *La Cour Pontifical d'Avignon, 1309–1376: Etude d'une société* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1966), pp. 485–86.

105. De Joinville, p. 210.

106. C. 32 q. 1 c. 1, taken from an apocryphal work ascribed to Saint John Chrysostom. Gratian, in his *dictum* before this canon, appears to equate harlotry with adultery.

unless she first obtained a special dispensation for this purpose,¹⁰⁷ a provision which was consistent with Roman imperial law on the subject.¹⁰⁸ Still, marriage to a prostitute, although dubious, was not held to be actually sinful.¹⁰⁹ And a man who married a prostitute, believing her to be a chaste virgin, was held to be validly married, according to the leading theologian of the twelfth century.¹¹⁰

Gratian was inclined to take a cautiously more permissive view of the matter, although he observed gloomily that one could not trust the word of a harlot.¹¹¹ He distinguished between the situation in which a man married a whore who continued her trade and that in which a man married a whore in order to reform her. In the first situation the marriage was not allowed; in the second it was permitted.¹¹² The decretist commentators accepted Gratian's distinction. They also commonly insisted that the reformed prostitute must demonstrate her intention of changing her ways by doing penance prior to the marriage.¹¹³ Rolandus, a famous twelfth-century canonist who later became Pope Alexander III, remarked that in his day it was considered praiseworthy to marry reformed prostitutes.¹¹⁴ Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), in a decretal issued during the first year of his pontificate, confirmed Rolandus's observations. The pope lauded those who married harlots in order to reform them and described their actions as "not least among the works of charity." Further, he assured those who rescued public prostitutes and took them to wife that their actions would count for the remission of their own sins.¹¹⁵ Bernardus Parmensis, the author of the ordinary gloss to the thirteenth-century canonical code known as the *Decretals*, was apparently more dubious about this matter than was the pope: "This [decretal] concerns her who freely wishes to be chaste—if someone can be found who wishes to take her as a wife."¹¹⁶ Other commentators on the *Decretals* also insisted that corrigibility was an essential criterion: the incorrigible prostitute was not allowed to marry, and the man who kept such a one as his wife was classified as a pimp.¹¹⁷

107. C. 33 q. 2 c. 11-12; Esmein, 1:210.

108. *Cod.* 5.4.29.6; 9.9.20.

109. C. 32 q. 1 c. 14.

110. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* 4.30 (*PL*, 192:917); Esmein, 1:312–13.

111. C. 32 q. 1 d.p.c. 13.

112. C. 32 q. 1 c. 10, again equating whores with adulteresses; C. 32 q. 1 d.p.c. 13; Freisen (n. 15 above), pp. 621–22.

113. E.g., Paucapalea, *Summa* to C. 32, ed. J. F. von Schulte (Giessen: E. Roth, 1890), p. 125; *Summa Parisiensis* to C. 32 q. 1 c. 1 ad v. *sicut crudelis* (ed. McLaughlin, p. 240); Rufinus, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 1 pr. (ed. Singer, p. 475); Rolandus, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 1 (ed. Thaner, pp. 158–59); Huguccio, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 1 d.a.c. 1 (B.N. lat. 3892, fol. 308^{ra}).

114. Rolandus, *Summa* to C. 32 q. 1 (ed. Thaner, p. 162).

115. X 4.1.20 (= *Comp. II* 4.1.5).

116. X 4.1.20 *glos. ord.* ad v. *in uxores*: "Hic de ea, quae continere libenter vellet, si invenerit qui eam ducere vellet in uxorem. Ber."

117. E.g., Innocent IV, *Apparatus* to X 4.1.20 (fol. 465^v); Hostiensis, *Lectura* to X 3.32.19, no. 3, and X 4.1.20, no. 8 (vol. 3, fol. 121^{vb}; vol. 4, fol. 6^{vb}).

The man who wished to marry a prostitute, even one who had reformed her life, also faced certain problems. If he had previously had intercourse with her himself, there was some question whether he could marry her at all: Gratian raised the matter at two points in the *Decretum*, but left the solution unclear. He apparently believed that such a marriage would be licit, but that the woman must do penance.¹¹⁸ Once the marriage had been contracted, she could be put aside only if she reverted to her old ways and refused to do penance.¹¹⁹ If the husband were a cleric, he was further penalized for his choice of a wife: he could not be ordained to major orders even after the death of his wife,¹²⁰ and he was barred from any sort of promotion in the ecclesiastical hierarchy,¹²¹ although presumably it was possible to receive dispensation in such cases.¹²² Even after Innocent III's approval of marriage with harlots for purposes of reform, for ecclesiastical purposes¹²³ the ordinary gloss to the *Decretals* continued to classify men who married harlots as bigamists.

What does this survey of the canonistic jurisprudence tell us about the theory and practice of medieval prostitution?

The writings of the canonists underscore what other sources indicate about the prevalence of prostitution in medieval society. It is also clear that one reason for the frequency of prostitution in a society which was heavily influenced, not to say dominated, by ecclesiastical institutions and the doctrinal attitudes of the church, may well have been a fundamental ambivalence in the church's own law about prostitution. Although theologically denounced, prostitution was viewed by the lawyers as an evil which had to be tolerated in order to avert the greater evils which would follow from the abolition of prostitution. Further, medieval notions about male and female sexuality, as reflected in the lawyers' writings, led the church's legal functionaries to require women (whom they thought highly susceptible to sensual stimuli) to adhere to a higher standard of sexual morality than men. Conversely, however, the woman who fell into a life of prostitution was not overtly punished by harshly repressive measures, while men who frequented prostitutes were subject to more numerous and more severe punishments than were the ladies of joy whom they patronized. Ironically, then, the lawyers treated the pros-

118. C. 31 q. 1 c. 1-7; C. 32 q. 4 d.a.c. 1; Esmein, 1:208-10.

119. C. 32 q. 1 c. 1 *glos. ord. ad v. patronus*.

120. D. 33 c. 2; D. 34 c. 11, d.p.c. 14, c. 15.

121. Rufinus, *Summa* to D. 33 c. 2 (ed. Singer, p. 77); D. 33 d.a.c. 1 *glos. ord. ad v. sed queritur*; D. 34 d.p.c. 8 *glos. ord. ad v. meretricari*.

122. Rufinus, *Summa* to D. 34 pr. (ed. Singer, pp. 79-80).

123. X 1.21.1 *glos. ord. ad v. in bigamis*. Bigamy in the ecclesiastical law had a number of peculiarities (see Stephan Kuttner, "Pope Lucius III and the Bigamous Archbishop of Palermo," in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn, S.J.*, ed. John A. Watt, J. B. Morrall, and F. X. Martin [Dublin: Colin O'Lochlainn, 1961], pp. 409-53).

titute as a necessary evil, to be tolerated and dealt with rather leniently, while at the same time they looked upon the use of her services as a relatively serious crime, subject to stringent repressive measures.

The canonistic jurisprudence dealing with prostitution also points up another characteristic of the canon law rather generally, namely, the way in which it accommodated moral principles to the realities of human behavior. This was, after all, the basic service which the canonist performed for the medieval church and for society at large. The canonist attempted to translate the abstract principles of the theologian into practical, workable, behavioral norms. The canonistic treatment of prostitution illustrates this function of the canon law, I think, very well indeed. Without abandoning the moral principle that prostitution was an undesirable form of sexual behavior, the canonists tried to work out a functional system of norms which also took into account the existing structures of society and the family, and the nature of male and female sexuality as they understood them. Many of their fundamental ideas about the nature and function of sexual relations in society are not ones which are nowadays shared by most people in the Western world. But given the data and the assumptions with which the canonists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries worked, one can hardly fail to admire the ingenuity with which they reconciled reality with high principles in dealing with one of the most intimate and most difficult of all human behavioral situations.

University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

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Author(s): Claudine Dauphin

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Brothels, Baths and Babes Prostitution in the Byzantine Holy Land¹

by Claudine Dauphin

Graeco-Roman domestic sexuality rested on a triad: the wife, the concubine and the courtesan. The fourth century BC Athenian orator Apollodoros made it very clear in his speech *Against Neaira* quoted by Demosthenes (59.122) that 'we have courtesans for pleasure, and concubines for the daily service of our bodies, but wives for the production of legitimate offspring and to have reliable guardians of our household property'. Whatever the reality of this domestic set-up in daily life in ancient Greece,² this peculiar type of 'ménage à trois' pursued its course unhindered into the Roman period: monogamy *de jure* appears to have been very much a façade for polygamy *de facto*.³ The advent of Christianity upset this delicate equilibrium. By forbidding married men to have concubines on pain of corporal punishment, canon law elaborated at Church councils took away from this triangular system one of its three components.⁴

¹This article is based on a paper given at the Dublin Classics Seminar in the Department of Classics of University College Dublin on 25 April 1995 at the invitation of its organiser, Dr A. Erskine, whom we wish to thank warmly.

²In particular, see the discussion in M. Lloyd, *Euripides Andromache* (Warminster, 1995), pp. 6 ff.

³P. Salmon, *Population et dépopulation dans l'empire romain* (Bruxelles, 1974), p. 45.

⁴In particular Canon 87 of the Council *in Trullo* of 692. See C.J. Hefélé and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, T. III.¹ (Paris, 1909), p. 573.

Henceforth, there remained only the wife and the courtesan.

If we are to believe the *Lives* of the holy monks of Byzantine Palestine, the Holy Land (in particular the Holy City of Jerusalem, the aim of pilgrimages at the very heart of Christianity) was replete with 'abodes of lust' and prostitutes tracked down the monks in their secluded caves near the River Jordan. Thus, we are faced with a paradox: the coexistence of holiness and debauchery, of Christian asceticism and lust. Lest we forget that virtue is meaningless without vice, that holiness cannot exist without lewdness, a fifth century AD Gnostic hymn from Nag-Hammadi in Middle Egypt proclaimed: 'I am She whom one honours and disdains. / I am the Saint and the prostitute. / I am the virgin and the wife. / I am knowledge and I am ignorance. / I am strength and I am fear. / I am Godless and I am the Greatness of God'.

In the Old Testament, Jerusalem appeared as a Prostitute in dire need of purification through divine punishment (Ez. 16 and 23). Her degradation contrasted with her original faithfulness: 'How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice!', the prophet Isaiah (1:21) lamented. St John applied the epithet Prostitute 'clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!' (Rev. 18.16-17) to the idol-worshipping Great City, Babylon, Rome and ultimately to any great urban concentration. A similar opinion was held by the rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud in the fifth century AD who

considered that a bachelor who succeeded in remaining chaste in a large city was without any doubt an excessively pious man. Likewise, the monks of Nitria (modern Wadi Natrun), of the Kellia and of Scetis in Egypt and those of the Judaeen Desert in Palestine, considered that the city was *par excellence* a den of iniquity, of temptation and of sin. Harbours with international maritime trade links such as Alexandria and Beirut, and the universal Christian capital Jerusalem, both provided their innkeepers and harlots with a cosmopolitan clientèle of residents, travellers and pilgrims.

Free prostitution In the streets

Byzantine erotic epigrams, notably those of Agathias Scholasticus in the sixth century, generally describe encounters with prostitutes in the street.⁵ The winding, dark alleyways of the Old City of Jerusalem were particularly appropriate for soliciting by *scortae erraticae* or *ambulatrices*. These lurked under the high arches which bridged the streets of the Holy City and walked up and down the *cardo maximus*. In the small towns of Roman and Byzantine Palestine, however, it seems that the squares (not the streets) were the favourite hunting-grounds of prostitutes. Rabbi Judah observed: "'How fine are the works of this people [the Romans] ! They have made streets, they have

⁵*Palatine Anthology* (A.P.) 5.46; 5.101; 5.302 and 5.308. See also, R.C. McCail, 'The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus', *Byzantion* 41 (1971), p. 215. We are grateful to Dr R.C. McCail of the Department of Classics, University of Edinburgh, for introducing us to Agathias' erotic poetry connected with prostitution.

built bridges, they have erected baths !'. Rabbi Yose was silent. Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai answered and said, 'All what they made, they made for themselves; they built market-places, to set harlots in them; baths to rejuvenate themselves; bridges to levy tolls for them'" (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 33b).

At home

Some harlots worked at home, either on their own account, such as Mary the Egyptian whose *Life* was written down in the sixth century by Sophronios, the last Patriarch of Jerusalem before the Arab Conquest, or for a pimp. On the evidence of the legislation of Emperor Justinian in the mid-sixth century, in particular *Novella* 14 of 535, it is clear that providing housing was part of the deal which the pimps of Constantinople struck with the fathers of the young peasant girls whom they bought in the capital's hinterland. Housing did not necessarily mean a house, and was frequently only a shack, hut or room. Byzantine prostitutes were relegated to 'red light districts' in the same way that the prostitutes of Rome lived and worked predominantly in Subura and near the Circus Maximus, thus to the north and south of the Forum. In the late sixth-century *Life of John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria*, Leontios of Neapolis describes a monk coming to Tyre on some errand. As he passed through 'the place', he was accosted by a prostitute who cried out: 'Save me, Father, like Christ saved the harlot', this referring to Luke 7:37. These districts were generally the most destitute areas in town. The Babylonian Talmud (Pesahim 113b) relates how Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi

Hoshaia, both poor cobblers in the Land of Israel, dwelt in a street of harlots for whom they made shoes. The prostitutes were so impressed by these rabbis' chastity (for they would not even lift their eyes to look at the girls) that they took to swearing 'by the life of the holy rabbis of Eretz Yisrael'!

In tavernae

In city inns (*tavernae*) as well as in the staging posts for change of mounts (*mutationes*) or overnight stay (*mansiones*) along the official Roman road network (the *cursus publicus*), all the needs of travellers were catered for by the barmaids. They served them wine, danced for them and often led them upstairs to the rooms on the upper floor. In fact, according to the *Codex Justinianus*, a barmaid could not be prosecuted for adultery, since it was presumed that she was anyway a prostitute (CJ 9.9.28). In order to prevent Christian travellers from falling prey to sexual dangers of this sort, ecclesiastical canons forbade the clergy to enter those establishments. Soon, therefore, ecclesiastical resthouses (*xenodochia*) and inns specifically for pilgrims (*pandocheia*) run by members of the clergy, sprang up along the main pilgrim routes.

Institutionalised prostitution **Brothels**

Prostitution was also institutionalised under the form of brothels which Juvenal called *lupanaria* (Sat. 11.172-173) and Horace *fornices* (Ep. 1.14.21). These, John Moschus described in his sixth-century *Spiritual Meadow* as a 'house of prostitution' in

Jericho or even more vaguely 'an abode of lust' in Jerusalem (*Prat. Spir.* 17). The prostitutes who were employed in these establishments were slaves and the property of a pimp (*leno*) or of a 'Madam' (*Iena*). The very name of the prostitute in Tyre who called out to a monk to save her - *Kyria* Porphyria - is telling. She was so used as a 'Madam' to boss other women, that once she had been reformed and had convinced other harlots (presumably her former 'girls') to give up prostitution, she organised them into a community of nuns of which she became the abbess - the mirror image of her brothel.

A Byzantine brothel has recently been unearthed in the course of excavations at Bet She'an, ancient Scythopolis, capital of Palaestina Prima.⁶ At the heart of this thriving metropolis, a Roman odeon founded in the second half of the second century was partly destroyed in the sixth century. Byzantine Baths adjoined it to the west. To the south-west, the second row of shops of the western portico of the impressive Street of Palladius was also dismantled to make way for a semi-circular exedra (13x15m). Each half of the exedra comprised six trapezoidal rooms with front doors. Some of these rooms also opened onto a corridor or a hall at the back of the building. In one room, a staircase led to an upper storey. Some rooms had niches with grooves for wooden shelves. The

⁶G. Mazor, 'City Center of Ancient Bet Shean - South', *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 1987/88, Vol. 6 (1987), pp. 18 ff.; R. Bar-Nathan and G. Mazor, 'City Center (South) and Tel Iztabba Area. Excavations of the Antiquities Authority Expedition, The Bet She'an Excavation Project (1989-1991)', *Excavations and Surveys in Israel*, Vol. 11 (1993), pp. 43 ff.

apses at both ends of the exedra and in the centre of the semi-circle, as well as the façades of the rooms were revetted with marble plaques, most of which are now lost, there only remaining holes for the nails which held these plaques in position. The inner faces of the walls of these rooms exhibited two coats of crude white plaster.

The floor of most of these rooms was paved with mosaics depicting geometric motifs enclosing poems in Greek, animals and plants, and lastly, in an *emblema*, a magnificent *Tyche* crowned by the walls of Scythopolis and holding a *cornucopia*. The mosaic pavements of some rooms had been subsequently replaced by bricks or a layer of crushed lime. Traces of crude repairs in the mosaics and the insertion of benches in other rooms indicated that the building had undergone various stages of construction. A semi-circular courtyard (21x30m) stretched in front of the twelve rooms. Towards the street, it was closed off by a set of rooms which incorporated the shops previously at the northern end of the portico of the Street of Palladius, whilst putting them to a different use. This row of rooms which was probably interrupted by the main entrance into the complex, opened onto a portico with an *opus sectile* floor of black and white marble. Two steps running for the entire length of the portico enabled access from the street. The portico and the rooms had a tiled roof. The exedra was demolished at the end of the sixth century or in the early seventh century.

The cabins of the Bet She'an exedra are reminiscent of the cells of the Pompeii *lupanarium*

which consisted of ground floor rooms, each equipped with a stone bed and a bolster. An external staircase provided access to the first floor balcony onto which opened five more spacious rooms. At Bet She'an, the back doors of some rooms on the ground floor enabled clients who were keen to remain anonymous, to enter an abode of lust without being seen from the main street and thus to surreptitiously satisfy their sexual fantasies.

The portico where the girls strolled in the hope of attracting passers-by from the Street of Palladius, as well as the neighbouring Byzantine Baths were part of a fascinating network: soliciting at the Baths, in the portico and in the exedra courtyard, followed by sex in the cabins; and at the back of the building, an entrance-and-exit system for supposedly 'respectable clients'.

Hierarchy and regulations in prostitution

There were two categories of Byzantine harlots: on the one hand, actresses and courtesans (*scenicae*), on the other, poor prostitutes (*pornai*) who fled from rural poverty and flocked to the great urban centres such as Constantinople and Jerusalem. There, even greater destitution pushed them straight into the rapacious hooks of crooks and pimps.

Actresses and courtesans

The *scenicae* were involved in a craft aimed primarily at theatre-goers. It has been described as a 'closed craft', since daughters took over from their mothers. The classic example is that of the mother of

the future Empress Theodora who put her three young daughters to work on the stage of licentious plays. The poet Horace described in his *Satires* (1.2.1) Syrian girls (whose name *ambubaiae* probably derived from the Syrian word for flute, *abbut* or *ambut*) livening up banquets by dancing lasciviously with castanets and accompanied by the sound of flutes. Suetonius simply equated these with prostitutes (*Ner.* 27). That is why Jacob, Bishop of Serûgh (451-521) in Mesopotamia warned in his *Third Homily on the Spectacles of the Theatre* against dancing, 'mother of all lasciviousness' which 'incites by licentious gestures to commit odious acts'. A sixth-century mosaic in Madaba in Transjordan depicts a castanet-snapping dancer dressed in transparent muslin next to a satyr who is clearly sexually-roused.⁷

According to Bishop John of Ephesus' fifth-century *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, Emperor Justinian's consort was known to Syrian monks as 'Theodora who came from the brothel'. Her career proves that Byzantine courtesans like the Ancient Greek *hetairai* could aspire to influential roles in high political spheres. Long before her puberty, Theodora worked in a Constantinopolitan brothel where, according to the court-historian Procopius of Caesarea's *Secret History*, she was hired at a cheap rate by slaves as all she could do then was to act the part of a 'male prostitute'. As soon as she became sexually mature, she went on stage, but as she could play neither flute nor harp, nor even dance, she

⁷ M. Piccirillo, *Madaba le chiese e is mosaici* (Milano, 1989), pp. 134 ff.

became a common courtesan. Once she had been promoted to the rank of actress, she stripped in front of the audience and lay down on the stage. Slaves emptied buckets of grain into her private parts which geese would peck at. She frequented banquets assiduously, offering herself to all and sundry, including servants. She followed to Libya a lover who had been appointed Governor of Pentapolis. Soon, however, he threw her out, and she applied her talents in Alexandria and subsequently all over the East. Upon her return to Constantinople, she bewitched Justinian who was then still only the heir to the imperial throne. He elevated his mistress to Patrician rank. Upon the death of the Empress, his aunt and the wife of Justin II (who would never have allowed a courtesan at court), Justinian forced his uncle Justin II to abrogate the law which forbade senators to marry courtesans. Soon, he became co-emperor with his uncle and at the latter's death, as sole emperor, immediately associated his wife to the throne (*Anecd.* 9.1-10).

Poor prostitutes

Only a few courtesans could climb the social ladder in this phenomenal way. Most prostitutes who worked in brothels and *tavernae* and are described as *pornai*, were slaves or illiterate peasant girls like Mary the Egyptian who later became a holy hermit in the Judaeian desert. Because neither *hetairai* nor *pornai* had any legal status, and since *hetairai* were also slaves belonging to a pimp or to a go-between, the distinction between courtesans and *pornai* was based entirely on their different financial worth.

This aspect of the trade was inherent in the Latin name *meretrix* for prostitute, meaning 'she who makes money from her body'.

Three types of prices should be taken into consideration: the price for buying, the price for redeeming and the price for hiring. The peasants of the Constantinopolitan hinterland sold their daughters to pimps for a few gold coins (*solidi*). Thereafter, clothes, shoes and a daily food-ration would be these miserable girls' only 'salary'. To redeem a young prostitute in Constantinople under the reign of Justinian was cheap (*Novell.* 39.2). It cost 5 *solidi*, thus only a little more than the amount needed to buy a camel ($4\frac{1}{3}$ *solidi*) and a little less than for a she-ass ($5\frac{1}{3}$ *solidi*) or a slave-boy (6 *solidi*) in Southern Palestine at the end of the sixth century or in the early seventh century. That women could be degraded to the extent of being ranked with beasts of burden tells us much about Byzantine society.

In Rome and Pompeii, the services of a 'plebeia Venus' cost generally two asses - no more than a loaf of bread or two cups of wine at the counter of a *taverna*. Whereas the most vulgar kind of prostitute would only cost 1 as (Martial claimed in *Epig.* 1.103.10: 'You buy boiled chick peas for 1 as and you also make love for 1 as'), R. Duncan-Jones notes that the Pompeian charge could be as high as 16 asses or 4 sestericii.⁸ In early seventh-century

⁸R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge, 1982, 2nd ed), p. 246.

Alexandria, the average rate for hiring a prostitute is provided by the *Life of John the Almsgiver*. As a simple worker, the monk Vitalius earned daily 1 *keration* (which was worth 72 *folleis*) of which the smallest part (1 *follis*) enabled him to eat hot beans. With the remaining 71 *folleis*, he paid for the services of a prostitute which being a saint, he naturally did not use, for his aim was to convert them to a Christian life.

Lack of clients over several days meant poverty and hunger. Thus a harlot in Emesa, modern Homs in central Syria, had only tasted water for three days running, to which St Symeon Salos remedied by bringing her cooked food, loaves of bread and a pitcher of wine. On days when she earned a lot, Mary the Egyptian prostitute in Alexandria ate fish, drank wine excessively and sang dissolute songs presumably during banquets. In denouncing the Byzantine courtesans' obscene lust for gold, the sixth-century rhetor Agathias Scholasticus echoed the authors of the fourth-century BC Athenian Middle Comedy. In particular, the poet Alexis claimed that 'Above all, they [the prostitutes] are concerned with earning money'.⁹ Sometimes a prostitute's jewellery was her sole wealth. When in 539, the citizens of Edessa, modern Urfa in south-eastern Turkey, decided to redeem their fellow-citizens who were held prisoners by the Persians, the prostitutes (who did not have enough cash) handed over their jewels (Procop. *De Bell. Pers.* 2.13.4).

⁹Agathias, *A.P.* 5.302; Alexis, fr. 103 (Athenaeus XIII 568a), Kassel-Austin ed.

It is probably because prostitution could occasionally be very lucrative and thus beneficial through taxation, that the Christian Byzantine State turned a blind eye. Since the Roman Republic, according to Tacitus (*Ann.* II.85.1-2), male and female prostitutes had been recorded nominally in registers which were kept under the guardianship of the *aediles*. From the reign of Caligula, prostitutes were taxed (Suet. *Cal.* 40).

Christianity's condemnation of any type of non-procreative sexual intercourse brought about the outlawing of homosexuality in the Western Empire in the third century and consequently of male prostitution. In 390, an edict of Emperor Theodosius I threatened with the death penalty the forcing or selling of males into prostitution (*C.Th.* 9.7.6). Behind this edict lay not a disgust of prostitution, but the fact that the body of a man would be used in homosexual intercourse in the same way as that of a woman. And that was unacceptable, for had St Augustine not stated that 'the body of a man is as superior to that of a woman, as the soul is to the body' (*De Mend.* 7.10)?

In application of Theodosius' edict in Rome, the prostitutes were dragged out of the male brothels and burnt alive under the eyes of a cheering mob. Nevertheless, male prostitution remained legal in the *pars orientalis* of the empire. From the reign of Constantine I, an imperial tax was levied on homosexual prostitution, this constituting a legal safeguard for those who could therefore

engage in it 'with impunity'. Evagrius emphasises in his *Ecclesiastical History* (3.39-41) that no emperor ever omitted to collect this tax. Its suppression at the beginning of the sixth century removed imperial protection from homosexual prostitution. In 533, Justinian placed all homosexual relations under the same category as adultery and subjected both to death (*Inst.* 4.18.4).

Already in 529, Justinian had attempted to put a curb on female child prostitution by penalising all those engaged in that trade, in particular the owners of brothels (*CJ* 8.51.3). In 535, he invalidated the contracts by which the pimps of Constantinople put to work peasant girls whom they had bought from their parents (*Novell.* 14). The prostitution of adult women, however, does not appear to have unduly worried the imperial legislator. The punishment inflicted on pimps who ran the child prostitution network, varied according to their wealth and respectability. Paradoxically, Byzantine administration considered the job of Imperial Inspector of the Brothels as eminently honourable, so much so that in 630 the Bishop of Palermo was appointed to this post.

The recruiting of prostitutes

The evidence of Justinianic legislation brings to light a change in child prostitution from Roman times when paedophilia focused on small boys much praised notably by Tibullus (*Eleg.* 1.9.53), to the Byzantine period when little girls found themselves at the centre of a prostitutional web. Some of the peasant girls recruited by pimps in the hinterland

of Constantinople, were not even ten years old. St Mary the Egyptian admits that she left her parents and her village at the age of twelve and went to Alexandria where she lost both her virginity and her honour by prostituting herself (and enjoying it - which in the eyes of prudish Byzantines was the ultimate sin).

Abandoned children supplied to a large extent the prostitution market. Justin Martyr had observed that nearly all newborn babes who had been exposed, 'boys as well as girls, will be used as prostitutes' (1 *Apol.* 27). This entailed the risk of incest which obsessed Christian theologians: 'How many fathers, forgetting the children they abandoned, unknowingly have sexual relations with a son who is a prostitute or a daughter become a harlot?', asked Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 3.3).

The patristic and rabbinic ban on birth-control except for abstinence *post partum* and whilst breast-feeding, as well as the failure both to enforce adherence to the ecclesiastical calendar in marital intercourse or complete abstinence as advocated by Lactantius (*Divin. Inst.* 6.20.25), resulted in an increase of unwanted infants who joined the small victims of poverty on the Byzantine prostitution market. In 329, Constantine I decreed that a newborn could be sold by its parents in the event of dire poverty. A law of 428 cited poverty again as the main reason for the exploitation of poor girls by pimps. A century later, the Byzantine historian Malalas emphasised that it was only the poor who sold their daughters to pimps (*Chronogr.*

18). It was also out of want and hunger that a desperate Christianised Arab woman offered her body to Father Sissinius, a hermit who lived in a cave near the River Jordan at the end of the sixth century. When Sissinius asked her why she prostituted herself, her answer was limited to a pathetic: 'Because I am hungry' (Mosch. *Prat. Spir.* 136). Likewise, during the 1914-1918 war in Palestine, hunger forced adolescent girls to sell themselves to the German and Turkish troops.

Prostitution, Baths and illness

Famous courtesans and common harlots, all met in the public Baths which were already frequented in the Roman period by prostitutes of both sexes. Some of these baths were strictly for prostitutes and respectable ladies were not to be seen near them (Mart. *Epigr.* 3.93). Men went there not to bathe, but to entertain their mistresses as in sixteenth-century Italian *bagnios*. The fourth-to-sixth-century Baths uncovered in Ashqelon in 1986 by the Harvard-Chicago Expedition appear to have been of that type. The excavator's hypothesis is supported both by a Greek exhortation to 'Enter and enjoy...' which is identical to an inscription found in a Byzantine bordello in Ephesus, and by a gruesome discovery.¹⁰

The bones of nearly 100 infants were crammed in a sewer under the bathhouse, with a gutter running along its well-plastered bottom. The

¹⁰L.E. Stager, 'Eroticism and Infanticide at Ashkelon', *Biblical Archaeology Review* XVII, No. 4 (July-August 1991), pp. 50 ff.

sewer had been clogged with refuse sometime in the sixth century. Mixed with domestic rubbish - potsherds, animal bones, murex shells and coins - the infant bones were for the most part intact. Infant bones are fragile and tend to fragment when disturbed or moved for secondary burial. The good condition of the Ashqelon infant bones indicates that the infants had been thrown into the drain soon after death with their soft tissues still intact. The examination of these bones by the Expedition's osteologist, Professor Patricia Smith of the Hadassah Medical School - Hebrew University of Jerusalem, revealed that all the infants were approximately of the same size and had the same degree of dental development. Neonatal lines in the teeth of babies prove the latters' survival for longer than three days after birth. The absence of neonatal lines in the teeth of the Ashqelon babies reinforces the hypothesis of death at birth.

Whilst it is conceivable that the infants found in the drain were stillborn, their number, age and condition strongly suggest that they were killed and thrown into the drain immediately after birth.¹¹ Thus, the prostitutes of Ashqelon used the Baths not only for hooking clients but also for surreptitiously disposing of unwanted births in the din of the crowded bathing halls. It is plausible that the monks and rabbis were aware of this and that this (and not only the fear of temptation) was their main reason for equating baths with lust.

¹¹P. Smith and G. Kahila, 'Bones of a Hundred Infants Found in Ashkelon Sewer', *Biblical Archaeology Review* XVII, No. 4 (July-August 1991), p. 51.

In the eyes of the pious Jews of Byzantine Palestine, any public bathhouse which was not used for ritual purification (*mikveh*) was tainted with idolatry, not only because it belonged to Gentiles, but also because a statue of Venus stood at the entrance of many bathhouses. The statue of Venus greeting the users of the Baths of Aphrodite at Ptolemais-'Akko which the Jewish Patriarch Gamaliel II regularly frequented, was invoked by Proclus the Philosopher to accuse Gamaliel of idolatry. The Patriarch succeeded in clearing himself of this charge by demonstrating that the statue of Aphrodite simply *adorned* the Baths and in no sense was an idol (Mishna, Abodah Zarah 3.4).

Nevertheless, Venus which Lucretius (4.1071) had dubbed *Volgiva* - 'the street walker' - was the patron of prostitutes who celebrated her feast on 23 April late into the Byzantine period. This, too, must explain the intense hostility of some rabbis towards the public baths of the Gentiles over which the goddess ruled both *in marmore* and *in corpore*. Since Biblical times, lust had always been intimately associated with the idolatrous worship of the *ashera* - a crude representation of the Babylonian goddess of fertility Ishtar who had become the Canaanite, Sidonian and Philistine Astarte and the Syrian Atargatis (1 Kgs 14.15) - as well as with the green tree under which an idol was placed (1 Kgs 14.23; Ez 6.13). Had the prophet Jeremiah (2.20) not accused Jerusalem of prostituting herself: 'Yea, upon every high hill / and under every green tree, / you bowed down as a harlot'?

Prostitution and sin

Satisfying sexual temptation and thus transgressing a ban inevitably brought about divine punishment of which leprosy was the embodiment *par excellence*. Relentlessly niggled by the 'spirit of impurity', a monk left his monastery of Penthucla in the lower Jordan Valley and walked to Jericho in order 'to satisfy his evil yearning' writes John Moschus (*Prat. Spir.* 14). "When he entered into the house of prostitution, he was at once completely covered in leprous spots; and having realised how awful he looked, he immediately returned to his monastery, giving thanks to God and saying: 'God has inflicted on me this illness, so that my soul would be saved'".

Syphilis

In fact, he had most likely not caught leprosy (which is not transmitted by sexual contact) but venereal syphilis, just like Heron, a young monk of Scetis who, 'being on fire', left his cell in the desert and went to Alexandria where he visited a prostitute. Palladius' narrative in the *Lausiack History* 26 continues thus: 'An anthrax grew on one of his testicles, and he was so ill for six months that gangrene set into his private parts which finally fell off'. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 33a), Rabbi Hoshiaia of Caesarea also threatened with syphilis 'he who fornicates'. He will get 'mucous and syphilous wounds' and moreover will catch the *hydrocon* - an acute swelling of the penis. These are precisely the symptoms of the primary phase of venereal syphilis.

There are, of course, two conflicting theories concerning syphilis. According to the Colombian or American theory, syphilis (*Treponema pallidum*) appeared for the first time in Barcelona in 1493, brought back from the West Indies by the sailors who had accompanied Christopher Columbus. On the other hand, the unicist theory claims that the pale *treponema* has existed since prehistoric times and has spread under four different guises: *pinta* on the American continent, *pian* in Africa, *bejel* in the Sahel, and lastly venereal syphilis which is the final form of a *treponema* with an impressive gift for mutation and adaptation.

The latter hypothesis is supported by a recent discovery of great importance made by the Laboratoire d'anthropologie et de préhistoire des pays de la Méditerranée occidentale of the CNRS at Aix-en-Provence. Lesions characteristic of syphilis have been detected on a foetus gestating in a pregnant woman who had been buried between the third and the fifth centuries AD in the necropolis of Costobelle in the Var district. *Bejel* is still endemic amongst some peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. A few cases have been recorded archaeologically on skeletons of Bedouins and settled Arabs of Ottoman Palestine. Contracted in childhood, *bejel* spreads by physical but not necessarily sexual contact, whereas syphilis which is an illness of adults, is transmitted only sexually. In both cases, the deterioration of the bones as well as the symptoms and the progress of the illness are identical. However, only venereal syphilis is able to go through the placenta and to

infect the embryo. The mother of the Costobelle foetus must therefore have suffered from venereal syphilis. This would confirm the view held by modern pathologists that venereal syphilis already existed in Ancient Greece and Rome.

The sin of enjoying sex

Besides the sin of lust punished by illness with which prostitutes contaminated all those who approached them physically, harlots embodied also the sin of sexual pleasure amalgamated with that of non-procreative sex condemned by the Church Fathers. The *Apostolic Constitutions* (7.2) forbade all non-procreative genital acts, including anal sex and oral intercourse. The art displayed by prostitutes consisted precisely in making full use of sexual techniques which increased their clients' pleasure. Not surprisingly therefore, Lactantius condemned together sodomy, oral intercourse and prostitution (*Divin. Inst.* 5.9.17).

One technique perfected by prostitutes both increased the pleasure of their partners and was contraceptive. Lucretius' description of prostitutes twisting themselves during coitus (*De rer. nat.* 4.1269-1275) was echoed by the Babylonian Talmud (Ketuboth 37a): 'Rabbi Yose is of the opinion that a woman who prostitutes herself turns round to prevent conception'.

Contraception

In the sermons of the Church Fathers, contraception and prostitution formed a couple that could only engender death. St John Chrysostom

cried out in *Homily 24 on the Epistle to the Romans* 4: 'For you, a courtesan is not only a courtesan; you also make her into a murderess. Can you not see the link: after drunkenness, fornication; after fornication, adultery; after adultery, murder?'. According to Plautus, abortion was a likely action for a pregnant prostitute to take (*Truc.* 179), either - Ovid suggested - by drinking poisons or by puncturing with a sharp instrument called the foeticide, the amniotic membrane which surrounds the foetus (*Amor.* 2.14). Procopius of Caesarea states emphatically that when she was a prostitute, Empress Theodora knew all the methods which would immediately provoke an abortion (*Anecd.* 9.20).

In the same breath, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (2.2) condemned both abortion and infanticide: 'You will not kill the child by abortion and you will not murder it once it is born'. In 374, a decree of Emperors Valentinian I and Valens forbade infanticide on pain of death (*Cod. Theod.* 9.14.1). Nevertheless, the practice which had been common in the Roman period, continued. That is why the Tosephta (Oholoth 18.8) repeated in the fourth century the warning made by the Mishna in the second century: 'The dwelling places of Gentiles are unclean... What do they [the rabbis] examine? The deep drains and the foul water'. This implied that the Gentiles disposed of their aborted fetuses in the drains of their own houses.

The newborn babies who had been killed and tossed into the main sewer of the Ashqelon Baths,

were predominantly boys.¹² This contradicts W. Petersen's statement that 'Infanticide is ... associated with the higher valuation of males'.¹³ According to him, whenever infanticide is practised, girls are first eliminated, followed by deformed and sickly children, offspring unwanted for reasons of magic (such as multiple births, twins or triplets) or of social ostracism (such as bastards). Beyond the biological fact that male births are more numerous than female births, the male dominance in the infanticide pattern at Ashqelon may derive in this precise case from the very trade of the mothers of these newborn children.

According to Apollodoros' *Against Neaira*, Greek *hetairai* predominantly bought young female slaves or adopted new-born girls who had been exposed. They educated them in the prostitutes' trade and confined them to the brothels until these girls were old enough to ply their trade themselves and support their adopted mothers in their old age. Consequently, in a society of prostitutes, would Petersen's 'natural' selection not have been reversed? Baby girls would have been kept alive and brought up in brothels so that eventually they would be able to pick up the trade from their mothers when the latter's attraction had faded. It

¹²Thanks are due to Prof. P. Smith for informing us on 11 November 1994 of the latest results of her paleoanthropological study.

¹³*Population* (New York-London, 3rd ed., 1975), p. 205.

would not have been possible to raise baby boys in the same way.¹⁴

Tainted by the sins of lust, of sexual enjoyment and murder, Byzantine prostitutes, however, were never 'branded', unlike the Roman prostitutes who by law had to look different from respectable young women and matrons and were therefore made to wear the *toga* which was strictly for men (Hor. Sat. 1.2.63); unlike, too the mediaeval harlots of Western Europe who are consistently depicted wearing striped dresses, stripes being the iconographic attribute of 'outlaws' such as lepers and heretics.¹⁵ Descriptions of the physical aspect of Byzantine prostitutes are at best vague, such as 'dressed like a mistress' in *Midrash Genesis Rabbah* (23.2). We can only imagine their appearance from fragmentary evidence, such as blue faience beaded fish-net dresses worn by prostitutes in Ancient Egypt, of which there are several strips in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Archaeology of Trinity College, Dublin.

Prostitution - a social necessity

'Banish prostitutes ... and you reduce society to chaos through unsatisfied lust', St Augustine warned (*De Ord.* 2.12). He preached, moreover, that 'unnatural sex is atrocious if committed with a prostitute, even more atrocious if committed with a

¹⁴We are extremely grateful to Dr M. Lloyd of the Department of Classics, University College Dublin, for discussing with us at length the various aspects of this problem and for suggesting to us this hypothesis.

¹⁵J.-Cl. Schmitt, 'Prostituées, Lépreux, Hérétiques: les rayures de l'infamie', *L'Histoire* No. 148 (Octobre 1991), p. 89.

wife... If a man wishes to use part of the body of a woman which it is forbidden to use for that, it is more shameful for the wife to allow for such crime to be performed on her body than to let it be done on another woman' (*De bon. conjug.* 11.12). Thus, in the well-organised world of the City of God, there was no need whatsoever for domestic contraception. If possessed by a non-procreative urge, a man simply had to go to a prostitute and pour out his sperm but *in vas*, since *coitus interruptus* was strictly forbidden. The harlot's rôle was therefore that of a 'natural' contraceptive.

As a result of a chain of false logic, sexual repression dictated by the Church Fathers led to eroticism *per se* at the hands of prostitutes. Whilst controlled procreative sexuality was kept harnessed at home, pleasure blossomed amongst the harlots. The *Midrash Genesis Rabbah* (23.2) explained that at the time of the Great Flood, a man used to marry two women, one to bear him children, and another for sexual intercourse only. The latter took a 'cup of roots' to render herself sterile and was accustomed to keep company with him dressed like a mistress. Is this not reminiscent of Apollodoros' triad amputated of the *pallake* - the concubine? Had values therefore not changed despite the advent of Judaeo-Christian civilisation?

In fact, values had changed, but in this particular context for the worse. Frankness had given way to prudish dishonesty displayed both by Rabbinic Judaism and Patristic Christianity. Such puritanism is surely to blame for the proliferation

of Byzantine prostitution and in its trail the increase in numbers of abandoned children. The bad faith shared by Augustine and Jerome on the matter of prostitution encouraged prostitution in exactly the same way that the Victorian brothel was, according to Michel Foucault, the offshoot of bourgeois puritanism.¹⁶

*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Paris*

¹⁶*Histoire de la Sexualité*. 1. *La volonté de savoir* (Paris, 1976) p. 11.



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Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church¹

VALERIE A. KARRAS

Despite the energy devoted by American and Western European church historians and theologians to the question of the ordination of women in early Christianity² and in the (western) medieval Christian Church,³ these scholars have shown comparatively little interest toward the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church,⁴ even when

1. This article is based in part on Valerie A. Karras, "The Liturgical Participation of Women in the Byzantine Church" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2002), chapter 6, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church," and will be republished, in longer form, in the author's forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Women in the Byzantine Liturgy* (Oxford University Press, expected 2005). The author would like to express deep appreciation to her graduate assistants, Michael Farley, Brett Huebner, Julia Schneider, and Daniel Van Slyke, for their retrieval of books, proofreading, and so on, at various stages of this research; to her dissertation committee, George T. Dennis, S.J., Eustratios Papaioannou, and Dominic Serra, for their patience and suggestions; and to two anonymous reviewers for their *extremely* helpful comments. All errors are, of course, the author's.
2. Relevant works include Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2000); Susanna Elm, "Vergini, vedove, diaconesse: alcuni osservazioni sullo sviluppo dei cosiddetti 'ordini femminili' nel quarto secolo in oriente," *Codex Aquilarensis* 5 (1991): 77–90; Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, trans. Jean Laporte and Mary Louise Hall (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1976); Giorgio Otranto, "Note sul sacerdozio femminile nell'antichità in margine a una testimonianza di Gelasio I," *Vetera Christianorum* 19 (1982): 341–60; Giorgio Otranto, *Italia meridionale e Puglia paleocristiane: Saggi storici* (Bari: Edipuglia, 1991); and Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993). As part of a broader examination of early church orders, see the discussion of deaconesses in J. G. Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963): 1–15. Early scholarship on the female diaconate, concentrating on the early church, includes Jan Chrysostom Pankowski, *De diaconissis* (Regensburg: George Joseph Manz, 1866); and A. Kalsbach, *Die altkirchliche Einrichtung der Diakonissen bis zu ihrem Erlöschen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1926).
3. See, for example, Gary Macy, "The Ordination of Women in the Early Middle Ages," *Theological Studies* 61:3 (September 2000): 481–507; and J. Ysebaert, "The Deaconesses in the Western Church of Late Antiquity and their Origin," *Instrumenta Patristica (Eulogia)* 24 (1991): 421–36.
4. The "Byzantine Church" refers to the church of the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire, particularly the Church of Constantinople, in the period from 330 (the founding of Constantinople as the imperial capital of the Roman Empire) to 1453 (the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks).

Valerie A. Karras is bibliographer with the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* at the University of California, Irvine.

comparative analysis could potentially help elucidate questions regarding the theology and practice of women's ordinations in the West.⁵ Most of the research on the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church has occurred in Mediterranean academic circles, usually within the field of Byzantine studies, or in the Eastern Orthodox theological community; sometimes the examination of the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church has been part of a broader examination of women's liturgical ministries.⁶

The evidence for ordained female deacons in the early Christian period, at least in portions of the Eastern Church, is clear and unambiguous.⁷ That deaconesses continued to exist from the early through the middle Byzantine period,⁸ at least in Constantinople and Jerusalem,

5. For example, Macy draws on Eastern Church practice only in a footnote referencing the ordination of deaconesses in the early church, and does not discuss contemporaneous Byzantine practice at all, although it could help explain his observation that "some medievals, including bishops and popes, considered deaconesses and abbesses to be as ordained as any other cleric." Macy, "The Ordination of Women," 502 and 502, n. 93.
6. Works in whole or part on the Byzantine deaconess include Paul F. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West* (New York: Pueblo, 1990); Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, *Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox, 1998); Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, trans. K. D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986); Robert F. Taft, S.J., "Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When—and Why?" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998): 27–87; Evangelos Theodorou, "Ἡ (χειροτονία) ἡ (χειροθεσία) τῶν διακονίσσων," *Theologia* 25:3–4 and 26:1 (July–September and October–December 1954; January–March 1955): 430–601 and 56–76; and Cipriano Vagaggini, "L'ordinazione delle diaconesse nella tradizione greca e bizantina," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 40 (1974): 145–89.
7. Although it does not give ordination rites, the early-third-century *Didascalia Apostolorum*, extant in Syriac from a lost Greek original, parallels the ministry of female deacons to that of male deacons; A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vols. 401 and 407, Syr. 175 and 179 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1979); Eng. trans. A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vols. 402 and 408, Syr. 176 and 180 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1979). Book VIII, 3–5, 16–26, of the fourth-century Syriac *Apostolic Constitutions*, which is heavily dependent on the earlier *Didascalia*, gives the ordination rite for bishops, presbyters, deacons, deaconesses, subdeacons, and readers, and the consecration rite for confessors, virgins, widows, and exorcists. *Les Constitutions Apostoliques*, 3 vols., ed., trans., intro., critical text, notes Marcel Metzger, Sources Chrétiennes (hereafter SC), vols. 320, 329, and 336 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985–87), 3:138–48, 216–28; Eng. trans. "Apostolic Constitutions," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, reprint ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 481–83, 491–93. For a discussion of these and other early church documents relating to the female diaconate in the East, see Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 83–92; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 35–119.
8. The "early Byzantine period" denotes the fourth through sixth centuries. The turbulent seventh and eighth centuries, as the early part of the "middle Byzantine period," constitute a liminal phase marking the final transformation of society, state, and culture from late antique to what is characteristically considered "Byzantine." The "middle Byzantine period" thus extends from this transitional time through the ninth

is also indisputable. (This is not to say that deaconesses were to be found throughout the Empire; there clearly were certain localities where deaconesses did not exist.⁹)

While the literary record does not give a detailed and comprehensive picture of the female diaconate, especially with respect to liturgical activities, the order appears to have thrived in the early Byzantine period.¹⁰ From the late fourth to the late seventh century, we have ample literary evidence of a female diaconate in the capital city, and archeological evidence of deaconesses in a number of other areas of the Empire, particularly Asia Minor.¹¹ During his tenure as archbishop of Constantinople, for instance, John Chrysostom counted as one of his closest friends and supporters the wealthy and influential deaconess Olympias.¹² Ecumenical councils set a minimum age for

century (post-iconoclasm) to the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204; the late period then dates from the Latin occupation until the Ottoman conquest in 1453.

9. See, for example, Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 132, regarding the area west of the Jordan in the early to mid-sixth century. Also, most scholars have assumed that ordained female deacons did not exist in Egypt, based on the scanty literary evidence and on comments by Origen and Clement of Alexandria indicating a nonliturgical office; see Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 76–100; Otranto, “Note sul sacerdozio femminile,” 343; Ysebaert, “Deaconesses,” 424. Ugo Zanetti, “Y eut-il des deaconesses en Égypte?” *Vetera Christianorum* 27 (1990): 369–73, shows through textual analysis that women deacons are specifically mentioned in the *euchologion* of the White Monastery in the tenth century, but nothing is known of their rank or functions, nor whether they were ordained.
10. There are numerous women titled “deacon” in late antique correspondence, saints’ lives, and *apophthegmata* (“sayings” or short stories). For brief descriptions of some of these women, see Gillian Cloke, “This Female Man of God”: *Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450* (London: Routledge, 1995), 208–9; Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 2001), 109–26.
11. While references to deaconesses (the Greek word is *διάκονος* with the feminine article, the significance of which will be discussed below) are scattered throughout the Greek-speaking Mediterranean, the most numerous epigraphic references to female deacons are Asia Minor inscriptions dating to the fourth through sixth centuries; see Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 162–74.
12. Olympias previously had been a protégé of Gregory of Nazianzus as well. See Elizabeth A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1979), 107–57; Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 178–81. Elm (*ibid.*, 174, 181–82) suggests that the ordained female diaconate developed, at least in part, as a method of simultaneously satisfying wealthy and powerful widows and controlling them as ordained clergy in a way that was not possible with the consecrated but nonordained order of Widows. Her theory is plausible, in that the already existing office of deaconess—for which there is some evidence by the end of the first or early in the second century—came to be used as a method of rewarding and honoring (and simultaneously controlling) these wealthy, powerful, and influential aristocratic women. Certainly, early imperial legislation of the female diaconate shows its roots in the order of Widows: Theodosius in June 390 promulgated a law requiring that deaconesses be widows of at least age sixty (the minimum age stipulated by the Apostle Paul for enrolled Widows) and with children to whom they would leave most of their property. *Codex Theodosiani*, Lib. 16, t. 2, no. 27; in *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, eds. T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905), 843–44. See, too,

deaconesses,¹³ and Justinian's legislation regarding clergy at the great imperial churches of Hagia Sophia and Blachernae in the mid-sixth century included female deacons, for whom he also promulgated strict laws enforcing chastity.¹⁴ There was even a neighborhood of Constantinople, attested to from the eighth through at least the eleventh century, known as that "of the Deaconess"—presumably it was named after a deaconess of the seventh or eighth century, perhaps the sister of the seventh-century patriarch Sergius.¹⁵ The Barberini codex, containing a liturgical manual (*euchologion*) from the liminal period of the eighth century, provides an ordination rite for female deacons that is more analogous to that of male deacons than are the less detailed, late antique Eastern Church orders of several centuries earlier; in fact, the ordination rite for female deacons in the Barberini codex is virtually identical to the male deacons' rite.¹⁶

The female diaconate continued to exist—at least within the capital city and in some women's monastic communities¹⁷—throughout the

Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7, 16, 11, in Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Joseph Bidez with Günther Christian Hansen. Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Jahrhunderte, Neue Folge (Berlin: Akademie, 1995), 4:324 (hereafter GCS).

13. For example, can. 15 of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451, set the minimum age at forty, twenty years younger than the emperor Theodosius had required sixty years earlier; Ioannes Baptista Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici Graecorum historia et monumenta iussu Pii ix. Pont. Max. Vol. 1: A primo ad VI saeculum* (Rome: S. Congregationis de Propagande Fide, 1864; reprint, Bardi Editore, 1963), 528; Carl J. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1875), 2:519. Can. 14 of the Council in Trullo (691–92) reiterated the same age requirement; Ioannes Baptista Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici Graecorum historia et monumenta iussu Pii ix. Pont. Max. Vol. 2: A VI ad IX saeculum* (Rome: S. Congregationis de Propagande Fide, 1868; reprint, Bardi Editore, 1963), 31–32. See Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 107–9. Imperial legislation also set minimum ages and otherwise regulated clergy, including deaconesses. In the sixth century, Justinian lowered Theodosius' minimum age for female deacons from sixty to forty (Nov. 123, chap. 13); this was reiterated in book 3, title 1, chap. 5 of the ninth-century *Basilics* (an abridged and somewhat updated version of the Justinianic legal corpus, compiled under the emperors Basil I and Leo VI). *Basilicorum libri LX. Series A*, 8 vols., eds. H. J. Scheltema and N. van der Wal (Groningen: Wolters, 1955–88).
14. See the discussion in Section IV, below, esp. nn. 109, 112, and 113.
15. The neighborhood was called "τὰ τῆς Διακονίσσης." See R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1964), 341.
16. Barberini gr. 336 preserves the oldest extant Byzantine *euchologion*: *L'eucologio Barberini gr. 336* (Ff. 1–263), eds. Stefano Parenti and Elena Velkovska, *Bibliotheca "ephemerides Liturgicae" "subsidia,"* vol. 80 (Rome: C.L.V.—Edizioni Liturgiche, 1995). The ordination of the female deacon (secs. 163–34, in *Barberini*, 185–88) will be thoroughly examined in Section V, below.
17. According to Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 151–52, two manuscripts of liturgical service books (*euchologia*)—the Grottaferrata codex from the eleventh or twelfth century and the Cairo codex from the fourteenth century—specify that the deaconess, "according to the custom that prevails today, . . . must be a nun in habit, tonsured," thereby implying that the rubrics writer was aware that nonmonastic women had formerly been ordained as deaconesses, but this was no longer the practice. Martimort cites as his

middle Byzantine period, with both liturgical and pastoral functions, although female deacons may not have continued to be ordained as late as the twelfth century, and their duties varied somewhat from those the order had in the early church.¹⁸ Evidence of their continuing liturgical and pastoral roles is provided, respectively, by Constantine Porphyrogenitus' tenth-century manual of ceremonies, which refers to a special area for deaconesses in the Constantinopolitan cathedral of Hagia Sophia (the "Great Church"),¹⁹ and by Anna Comnena's biographical panegyric to her father, the emperor Alexios I Comnenos, who ruled from 1081 to 1118: the princess mentions the emperor's concern to ensure that "the work of the deaconesses was carefully organized" in the church of St. Paul, attached to the large charitable complex Alexios had constructed in the capital city.²⁰ Two near-contemporaneous canonists of the twelfth century, John Zonaras and Alexios Aristenos, in their commentaries on canon 15 of Chalcedon,²¹ also discuss deaconesses as though still active. Their witness is confirmed, at least in the Great Church, at the turn of the thirteenth century by the eyewitness account of Anthony of Novgorod,²² and a century later by an unpublished *entalma* (order) of Patriarch Athanasius I (1303–9) calling for the abolition of the "custom" of deaconesses.²³ The question of how long female deacons survived as an *ordained* order is murkier, however, and will be discussed in

source A. Dimitrievskij, *Opisanie liturgitseskikh rukopisej*, vol. 2, Εὐχολόγια (Kiev: Izd. Imperatorskago Universiteta Sv. Vladimira, 1901), 346, 996. Curiously, this instruction is missing from the ordination rite, taken from the Grottaferrata manuscript, which is reproduced in Jacobus Goar, ed., *Euchologion sive rituale Graecorum* (Graz: Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1730; reprint 1960), 218–19. Goar's *euchologion* draws on a number of Greek manuscripts, but relies principally on the Grottaferrata codex.

18. With respect to functions and duties, see the discussion in Section II, below, for instance, regarding the universality of infant baptism.
19. According to Constantine, *De ceremoniis* 44 (35), for the feast of the Annunciation, the emperor, after visiting the *skeuophylakion* (where relics and vessels were kept, and the Gifts prepared), "passes through the narthex of the gynaeceum where the deaconesses of the Great Church have their customary place." Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. and trans. Albert Vogt (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1935), 171; Eng. trans. Taft, "Women at Church," 65.
20. Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 15, 7–8, in vol. 3 of Anna Comnena, *Alexiade (règne de l'empereur Alexis I Comnène, 1081–1118)*, trans. Bernard Leib (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, various), 217. These deaconesses may also have been the female chanters that Alexios ordered for the antiphonal chants in St. Paul's.
21. J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca* (hereafter PG) (Paris: Migne, 1857–66), 137:141–44. See the conclusion to this article for a discussion of their commentaries.
22. Anthony's description also confirms Constantine Porphyrogenitus' siting (n. 19, above) of a special location for deaconesses in Hagia Sophia. See nn. 49 and 50, below.
23. In codex Vat. gr. 2219, f. 132v–143r; see No. 1747, item 1, in V. Laurent, *Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, vol. I, *Les actes des patriarches*, fasc. IV, *Les registres de 1208 à 1309* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1971), 526: "Ils proscrirent les

Section VI of this article; the extant evidence provides a *terminus ante quem* of the early twelfth century.²⁴

The next several sections of this article will show that both civil and ecclesiastical legislation, and liturgical theology as manifested in the ordination rite, demonstrate unquestionably that the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church during the early and middle Byzantine periods was recognized not only as part of the clergy, but as one of the "major orders" of clergy, as that term would later be used to denote the threefold ordained orders of the episcopacy, the priesthood, and the diaconate.

I. THE MINISTRY OF BYZANTINE DEACONESSSES

The activities of Byzantine deaconesses varied over time. Anna Comnena's mention of deaconesses attached to the church serving her father's large philanthropic center implies that charitable and other pastoral activities remained an ongoing concern of at least some female deacons. However, the primary reason for ordination to the clergy is specific liturgical function, and that is the area for which we have the most information with respect to female deacons, especially in late antiquity. One of the most important sacramental duties of the deaconess in the early church in the East was conducting the physical anointing²⁵ and baptism of (nude) adult women, who were then "officially" baptized by the bishop's prayer over the just-baptized woman after she was either chastely robed or hidden from male gaze.²⁶ This function of deaconesses was made obsolete by the increasing rarity of adult baptism from the end of the fourth century on due to the combination of the dominance of Christianity as the state religion and the universal adoption of infant baptism.²⁷

monastères doubles et feront cesser la coutume des diaconesses." The author is grateful to an anonymous reviewer for citing this *entailma*.

24. See n. 53, below.

25. For example, John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 2, 24, describes this part of the rite as performed (for men) in Antioch in the late fourth century. Jean Chrysostome, *Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, intro., critical ed., trans., and notes Antoine Wenger, Sources Chrétiennes 50 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1957), 147.

26. *Apostolic Constitutions*, III, 16, in Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques II*, 154–58; Francis X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1905), 201; cf. Vööbus, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 53. The fifth-century *Testamentum Domini*, II, 8, prescribes a similar role for ordained Widows and also instructs that women being baptized be shielded from the presbyter or bishop's view by a veil. I. Rahmani, ed., *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1899; reprint, Hildesheim: George Olms, 1968), 128–31.

27. José Grosdidier de Matons, "La femme dans l'empire byzantin," in *Histoire mondiale de la femme*, ed. Pierre Grimal (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1967), 40, connects the decline of deaconesses to this lessening need for them in adult baptisms.

The conversion to Christianity of foreign women still provided occasion for female

However, while the baptismal need for female deacons decreased as the church moved into the early Byzantine period, other liturgical and pastoral duties remained, particularly with respect to women who were housebound due to illness or childbirth. The early church's practice of sending a deaconess with the Eucharist to the homes of housebound female parishioners,²⁸ although not specifically mentioned in texts dating from the middle Byzantine period, probably remained one of their functions well into this period. This is indicated by a letter of Photios written between 877 and 886 to Leo, bishop of Calabria in southern Italy. Leo had consulted the Constantinopolitan patriarch about certain canonical matters; among them was a question about women who took Communion to Christians who had been imprisoned (perhaps held hostage?) by "Saracens," that is, Arabs. In his reply, Photios instructed Leo to choose noble women, either virgins or in chaste old age,²⁹ who were "worthy of being received into the diaconate and of being received into the rank of deacons."³⁰ Since Leo asked the question of Photios, evidently the order of female deacons was not known in his area of Calabria by this time, or at least so few deaconesses still existed that the Calabrian bishop was unfamiliar with the guidelines for and restrictions on candidates to the order.³¹ Photios' response, on the other hand, indicates (1) that female deacons still existed (otherwise, his remarks about choosing women "worthy of being received into the diaconate" would make no sense), and (2) that he knew not only about the type of women who were ordained to the diaconate, but also that their ministry included taking the Eucharist to shut-ins.

deacons to assist in baptism, but, at least in rural Byzantine Palestine, that practice had fallen into disuse, although female deacons still existed in the Church of Jerusalem. See John Moschos, *Pratum spirituale*, chap. 3, in PG 87.3:2853–56.

28. For example, *Didascalia Apostolorum* 16: "For there are houses where you may not send deacons, on account of the pagans, but to which you may send deaconesses. And also because the service of a deaconess is required in many other domains." In Vööbus, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 156.
29. Unlike the canons and civil legislation regulating female deacons, Photios does not specify virgins and widows, but perhaps that is implied by the phrase "σεμνῶ γήρα."
30. Ep. 297, 4; in Photios, *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani epistulae et amphilochia*, eds. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, vol. 3, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Leipzig: BSB B. G. Teubner, 1983), 166.
31. Calabria was part of Byzantine Italy and so generally had more in common with Constantinople than with Rome. In fact, there is evidence of women deacons in Byzantine Italy in the seventh and eighth centuries (see nn. 36, 42, and 47, below), though not in the ninth. It is unclear, moreover, if they still existed, whether they existed as their own order by this time in the Latin Church (that is, further north in Italy). Western deaconesses' ministry may have been connected to that of their husbands; that is, they generally were the wives of deacons, and as such were also ordained and shared an active ministry with their husbands. See Gary Macy, "Ordination of Women," 493–94.

In addition to the needs of laywomen (and imprisoned laymen), the seclusion of nuns precipitated special needs within the female monastic community. Thus, as noted above, deaconesses became particularly associated with female monasticism, from the fourth-century deaconess Lampadion³² in charge of a choir of virgins in the monastic community founded by the "Fourth Cappadocian,"³³ Macrina, to St. Irene in the ninth century,³⁴ a nun attached to the convent of Chrysobalanton in Constantinople who, according to her tenth-century hagiographer, was ordained as a deacon of the Great Church, that is, Hagia Sophia:

Without delay the patriarch rose from his throne at once and asked for a censer. Burning incense and praising God he initiated a hymn befitting the occasion. Then he first ordained Irene deaconess of the

32. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Macrinae* 29, in Grégoire de Nysse: *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, intro., critical text, trans., notes Pierre Maraval, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 178:236; Eng. trans. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, ed. and trans. Kevin Corrigan (Toronto: Peregrina, 1997), 45. Corrigan notes (68, n. 78) that the Greek term χορός may have either a general meaning (a group), or the specific meaning of a choir, as may be inferred from Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, 25, in Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 134, or 26 in Hippolytus, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr*, 1968, trans. Gregory Dix, ed. Henry Chadwick, reprint with corrections from 2nd rev. ed. (London: Alban, 1991), vv. 18–32. See Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 78–81. Elm, *Virgins of God*, 177–78, n. 122, discussing the scholarly debate over the general or technical interpretation of the word in this context, observes that χορός is twice mentioned in the *vita* in a ceremonial sense, and cautiously raises Quasten's suggestion that it was in fact a musical chorus, while noting that Nyssa more commonly uses the word in its generic sense in the *vita*.
33. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 89.
34. While the *vita* of St. Irene purports to tell the life of a ninth-century saint, the English translator of the *Life* finds the lack of chronological coherence so striking as not only to suggest that the text was composed in the tenth century (which the hagiographer readily admits), but also to call into question the very existence of the female saint. Jan O. Rosenqvist, *The Life of St. Irene Abbess of Chrysobalanton* (Stockholm: Uppsala University, 1986), xxiii–xxix. While the latter conclusion is unwarranted given the Byzantine author's reference to the continuing veneration of Irene's tomb in his or her own day, Rosenqvist is no doubt correct in his theory that the description of Irene's life is a work of hagiographical fiction. However, that need not negate the value of the *vita*'s description of Irene's ordination at the hands of the patriarch. It would have made little sense for the hagiographer to include a description of her diaconal ordination if the practice were completely unfamiliar to the average Byzantine layperson. Since ordination as a deacon was not a standard trope in middle Byzantine *vitae* of female saints, its inclusion in *The Life of St. Irene* points to either current or relatively recent actual practice and may in fact be one of the few elements of the saint's life based in fact.

Great Church—for through the Spirit in him he knew her purity —, and thereafter consecrated her with the seal of hegumenate.³⁵

Three things are notable in the above account: (1) the (masculine) second declension noun *diakonos* (διάκονος) was still being used, rather than the feminized *diakonissa* (διακόνισσα); (2) the word *cheirotomia* (χειροτονία) was used, a technical term for ordination; and (3) Irene was simultaneously consecrated as *hegoumene*, or abbess, of her monastery. The use of the title *diakonos* is significant since the alternative title, *diakonissa*, could also refer to the wife of a deacon.³⁶ Both the saint's personal background—Irene was a nun with no former husband—and the term *diakonos* make it patent that the patriarch was indeed ordaining Irene to a clerical order. Her ordained status is further reinforced both by the use of the term *cheirotomia* for “ordination” (the significance of which will be discussed in Section V) and by the patriarch's beginning the Divine Liturgy, the liturgical context for ordinations to major orders.³⁷

35. Rosenqvist, *Life of St Irene*, 26–29.

36. J. G. Davies, “Deacons, Deaconesses,” 1, n. 1, states that the term διακόνισσα first appears in synodal literature in canon 19 of the Council of Nicaea, and the purely feminine term was sometimes used interchangeably with διάκονος (for example, in the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* and in some of Justinian's sixth-century legislation). Archbishop Peter L'Huilier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 244, observes that Justinian used the term διακόνισσα in legislation dealing with deaconesses alone; in legislation referring to both male and female deacons, however, he used the term διάκονος with the adjective(s) for the appropriate sex. Nevertheless, ἡ διάκονος is the more common term used for a female deacon (leading to potential ambiguity with respect to the masculine plural form). Both canonical and civil legislation in late antiquity and the early Byzantine period more regularly use the term διάκονος for a woman deacon, as do the overwhelming majority of epigrams for women deacons compiled by Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, chap. 7. Surprisingly, the use of this term for female as well as male deacons has not been readily recognized by some scholars, leading to unfortunate “corrections.” For example, Gustave Schlumberger, in his *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: Societé de l'Orient Latin, 1884; reprint, Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1963), 232, incorrectly notes “sic” and emends to “Antonin” (that is, Antoninos, a male name) the feminine genitive name Ἀντονίνης, which appears on the obverse of a seventh- or eighth-century seal from Byzantine Italy whose reverse shows the masculine/feminine genitive title διακόνου. In the CD-ROM *Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire I (641–867)*, ed. John Robert Martindale (London: King's College/Ashgate, 2001), Martindale does note that “it is possible that the feminine form ‘Antonina’ is correct and that the owner of the seal was a deaconess,” yet the entry is listed as “Antoninos I,” a male deacon, when in fact there is no legitimate reason to doubt that the owner of the seal was exactly what the seal indicates: a female deacon named Antonina.

37. The Greek phrase “τὸν θεὸν εὐλογήσας,” which Rosenqvist translates merely as the bishop's “praising God,” should be recognized as more likely referring to his beginning the divine liturgy: “Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς,” that is, “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father,” Goar, *Euchologion*, 52. (Alternatively, it could refer to the beginning blessing of several other services, “Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν,” that is,

As for the conjunction of the diaconate with Irene's consecration as abbess, this coincides with one of the two types of monastic women who typically were ordained to the diaconate in the early and middle Byzantine period:³⁸ (1) abbesses and nuns with liturgical functions, and (2) the wives of men who were being raised to the episcopacy.³⁹ By the fourth and fifth centuries, it was increasingly expected that men elevated as bishops would become celibate, even if married;⁴⁰ in the middle of the sixth century, the first civil legislation requiring this appeared, promulgated by Justinian in 531.⁴¹ The first ecclesiastical legislation requiring bishops to separate from their wives was enacted over a century later. Canon 48 of the Council in Trullo, held in 691–92, calls for the wife of a bishop to take monastic vows after her husband's consecration as bishop and, if deemed worthy, to be ordained a deacon.⁴² Perhaps the diaconate was expected since, as Choliĭ demonstrates with Theodore Balsamon⁴³ and others in the late middle Byzantine period, church officials believed "that the wife is, in some way, consecrated because of her union in marriage with her

"Blessed is our God.") The author thanks Eustratios Papaioannou for calling attention to this. Also, the order given, ordination first, followed by consecration as abbess, fits this interpretation since, although ordination to major orders occurred during the divine liturgy, ordination to lower orders, monastic tonsuring, and consecration to monastic offices were done outside of—hence, often after—the liturgy.

38. That the *entailma* of Patriarch Athanasius I, mentioned above (see n. 23), proscribed both double monasteries (that is, men's and women's joint communities) and deaconesses in the same item likely indicates that these deaconesses were nuns.
39. While most of the documentation for this latter category dates to the early and early middle Byzantine periods, one possible late antique example of this second category is Theosebia, who *may* have been a deaconess, and who was either the wife or sister of Gregory of Nyssa, based on a condolence letter he received from Gregory of Nazianzus. See Elm, *Virgins of God*, 157–58, for a discussion of the relative merits of the evidence; also, Michel René Barnes, "'The Burden of Marriage' and Other Notes on Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*," *Studia Patristica*, v. 37, part II, eds. M. F. Wiles and E. J. Yarnold (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 13, esp. n. 7.
40. C. Knetes, "Ordination and Matrimony in the Eastern Orthodox Church," *Journal of Theological Studies* 11 (1910): 481–90. Knetes attributes the development of the widespread expectation of episcopal celibacy to monastic influence.
41. *Code of Justinian* I, 3, 47 (48); in *Corpus iuris civilis* (hereafter CIC), 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1954–59), vol. 2, *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. Paul Krueger, 34. Justinian's legislation on bishops and their wives and families is discussed in Knetes, "Ordination and Matrimony," 490–91. For more on the history of marriage within the ordained orders of clergy, see Roman Choliĭ, *Clerical Celibacy in East and West* (Leominster, U.K.: Fowler Wright Books, 1989).
42. Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 2:50. An example from eighth-century Byzantine Italy is recounted in Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* 154, in *Le Liber pontificalis*, 3 vols., text, intro., and commentary L. Duchesne (Paris: E. Thorin; E. de Boccard, 1955–57), 1:483; cited in Martindale, *Prosopography*, "Euphemia 3" and "Sergios 54."
43. Balsamon, a canonist, was patriarch-in-exile of Antioch, residing in Constantinople in the late twelfth century.

husband-priest."⁴⁴ By the middle Byzantine period, bishops typically took monastic vows, so the monastic tonsure combined with ordination to the female diaconate was as near as the wife of a bishop could get to her (former) husband's ecclesiastical "rank."⁴⁵ There is no indication, however, that bishops' wives-cum-deaconesses were expected to have any particular liturgical or other ministry. Presumably they served the same functions as other deaconesses within a monastic setting.

These ministries of monastic female deacons were typically either liturgical or supervisory in nature. The simultaneous ordination and consecration of St. Irene of Chrysabalanton as both deacon and abbess reflects the continuation of a tradition evident from the early Byzantine period of combining these two offices; for example, Olympias and her successor, Elisanthia, were both abbess and deaconess.⁴⁶ This association of deaconess with abbess thus began by at least the late fourth century or early fifth century in the East, and occurred in the medieval period in the Latin as well as the Byzantine Church.⁴⁷

44. Cholij, *Clerical Celibacy*, 28. This became the rationale for forbidding the widows of priests to remarry. Gary Macy's article, "Ordination of Women," esp. 490–94, demonstrates how a similar attitude was manifested differently in the medieval Latin Church, by ordaining or consecrating the spouses of clerics.

45. Cholij, *Clerical Celibacy*, 28–29, cites similar reasoning in a requirement of Pope Alexander III preserved in the *Decretals* of Gregory IX, which disallowed a married man from entering a monastery unless his wife also took monastic vows. Regarding the wife's assumption of a rank similar to her husband's, Macy, "Ordination of Women," 493–94, suggests that the wives of presbyters and deacons in the Western Church perhaps had "at times formed a liturgical team with their spouse." He notes that, "according to a Roman Ordinal from ca. 900, *presbyterae* and deaconesses received their commissioning at the same time and as part of the same ceremony as the priests and deacons who were their spouses. The prayers for the ordination of deaconesses in the several sacramentaries through the twelfth century are identical (apart from the use of the feminine form) to those used in the ordination of a deacon. Both deaconesses and *presbyterae* received special vestments as part of their ordination rites. These rites apparently did not distinguish between those deaconesses (or *presbyterae*) who had an active ministry and those who were merely the spouses of priests and deacons." A Latin rite of ordination for the female deacon is published in Cyrille Vogel and Reinhard Elze, *Le Pontifical Romano-Germanique du dixième siècle. Le Texte I. Studi e Testi* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963), 226:54–59.

46. See Elm, *Virgins of God*, 180, who claims that "by the fifth century the *hegoumene*-deaconess nexus was common."

47. For example, Radegund of Poitiers; see Pauline Schmitt Pantel, ed., and Arthur Goldhammer, trans., "From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints," in *A History of Women in the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 1:437–38; Macy, "Ordination of Women," 492–93. Another example, from mid-eighth-century Byzantine Italy, is Euphrosyne, deaconess and abbess of the women's monastery of SS. Marcellinus and Petrus in Naples; Bartolommeo Capasso, *Monumenta ad Neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia* (Naples: F. Giannini, 1881), 1:262–63; cited in Martindale, *Prosopography*, "Euphrosyne 5." The *vita* of Neilos of Rossano, chap. 79, provides a tenth-century example of an abbess-deacon in Byzantine Italy (Capua); *Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νείλου τοῦ Νέου*, ed. G. Giovanelli (Grottaferrata:

As for public liturgical functions, the one most commonly mentioned is that of chanting. The *vita* of St. Macrina shows that Lampadia was responsible for the women's choir, a liturgical duty, which would make ordination to the diaconate appropriate. By the late middle Byzantine period, the liturgical function of chanting appears to have become one of the ministries of female deacons not only in women's monasteries but also in the Great Church. Several *typika* (liturgical or monastic rules) and *euchologia* (liturgical manuals or service books) mention women's choirs, which chanted the first part of matins.⁴⁸ The eyewitness account of Anthony of Novgorod, during his visit to Constantinople in about the year 1200, confirms this as contemporary practice. His testimony is particularly compelling since, unlike the ritual manuals, which characteristically attempt to preserve a record of even outdated rites and practices, Anthony's primary concern was simply to describe his experience. He observed a group of women, whom he mistakenly called "myrrhbearers,"⁴⁹ participating in the matins service at Hagia Sophia. Matter-of-factly and in passing, Anthony revealed that these women chanted during the matins: "And not far from this prothesis the Myrrhbearers sing."⁵⁰ These "myrrhbearers" probably were deaconesses since he located them in exactly the same spot as Constantine Porphyrogenitus had located the

Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972), 118. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for bringing the latter source to my attention.

48. Juan Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église. Ms. Sainte-Croix No 40, Xe siècle, vols. I-II*, trans. Juan Mateos, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, vols. 165–66 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1962–63), 1:4–5, 154, and 2:52 and 287; Miguel Arranz, "L'office de l'asmatikos hesperinos ('vêpres chantées') de l'ancien euchologe byzantin," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 44 (1978): 408.

49. The author is indebted to George Majeska, who noted that some Russian travelers to Constantinople, such as Anthony of Novgorod, mentioned "myrrhbearing women" who sang and who had a special place near the Great Church's "prothesis chapel," or *skeuophylakion*, which was located just outside the north door in the northeast bay, that is, the same place mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus as the "deaconesses' narthex" (see n. 19). For this reason, despite Anthony's identification of these women as myrrhbearers, Majeska believes that the reference is to the deaconesses of the Great Church. He theorizes that the confusion of titles was due to the Russians' not having deaconesses; the title "myrrhbearer," however, was frequently used for women serving a wide variety of nonordained functions in the Russian Church. The Russian use of the term "myrrhbearer" should not, however, be confused with the consecrated or ordained order of myrrhbearers in the Church of Jerusalem, which participated with the rest of the clergy in the Paschal services at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. See nn. 57 and 59, below.

50. A.III.8; in *Kniga Palomnika: Skazanie mest svjatykh vo Tsaregrade Antonija Arkhiepiskopa Novgorodskago v 1200 godu*, ed. Kh. M. Loparev, *Pravoslavnij Palestinskij Sbornik* (St. Petersburg: Izd. Imp. Pravoslavnago palestinskago ob va, 1899), 51:2–9; trans. Taft, "Women at Church," 67. Taft identifies the prothesis with the cylindrical *skeuophylakion* of the Great Church, just outside the walls of the church on the northeast side.

deaconesses over two hundred years earlier.⁵¹ These women, also called *askētriai* (so named after their communal ascetic lifestyle), in addition to Balsamon's description of their maintaining order in the women's aisle, sang during matins and for funerals, for which they also sometimes served as mourners.⁵² It is likely that these are the women to whom Balsamon dismissively referred when he commented: "[t]oday deaconesses are no longer ordained although certain members of ascetical religious communities are erroneously styled deaconesses."⁵³

In addition to the Great Church, this liturgical ministry of chanting was mirrored in other important churches, if not by deaconesses, then by monastic women following the same liturgical pattern. For example, a twelfth-century satirical account of a pilgrimage to Thessaloniki for the feast of its patron, St. Demetrios, describes the liturgical participation of nuns during the basilica's festal service as follows:

Then from those who had specially practiced the rituals of the festival—what a congregation they had there—there was heard a most divine psalmody, most gracefully varied in its rhythm, order, and artistic alternations. For it was not only men who were singing; *the holy nuns in the left wing of the church, divided into two antiphonal choirs*, also offered up the Holy of Holies to the martyr.⁵⁴

Commenting on this description, Sharon Gerstel notes that the wing where the nuns were located "must refer to the widened eastern end of the north aisle adjacent to the sanctuary."⁵⁵ In other words, the nuns in St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki were stationed in the area corresponding to the *gynaeceum* of the deaconesses in Hagia Sophia; moreover, like the deaconesses, they chanted from there during services.

It appears, then, that certain leadership positions within the monastery—at a minimum, those of abbess and of director of the liturgical choir—were associated with the female diaconate, recognition of the

51. See above, n. 19; Taft, "Women at Church," 65–70.

52. R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1975), 3:549–50; Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: Études sur le recueil des patria*, Bibliothèque Byzantine Études (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 8:252, n. 177. Earlier, until at least the ninth century, ordained female deacons were distinct from the *askētriai* (ἀσκήτριάι); see the citation from the *Basilics* in n. 115, below. Perhaps some of the ἀσκήτριάι were deaconesses.

53. Theodore Balsamon, *Scholia in Concilium Chalcedonense*, in PG 137:441; Eng. trans. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 171.

54. R. Romano, ed., *Timarione: Testo critico, introduzione, traduzione, commentario e lessico* (Naples, 1974), 59. Eng. trans. *Timarion*, trans. B. Baldwin (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 48–49; quoted in Gerstel, "Painted Sources," 92–93 (emphasis in Gerstel).

55. Gerstel, "Painted Sources," 93, n. 18.

supervisory or liturgical functions of these women. In addition, at least some deaconesses—and, later, nuns who served as their successors—attached to urban foundations served the broader community liturgically by chanting during the services in the great cathedrals.

Other specific activities of deaconesses during worship, whether in monasteries or in cathedrals and parish churches, are for the most part unknown, with one exception. A liturgical manual from the Church of Jerusalem⁵⁶ dating to the tenth century includes in its paschal rubrics two orders of ordained or consecrated women: female deacons and *myrophoroi* (myrrhbearers).⁵⁷ According to the rubrics, near the end of the paschal matins there was a procession to the *solea*,⁵⁸ which included two of various orders of clergy: deacons, subdeacons, *myrophoroi*, and deaconesses. While the *myrophoroi* followed behind the deacons, holding three-legged reading stands (*triskellia*), the deaconesses carried two *manoualia* (single candleholders) with lit candles.⁵⁹

In general, however, female deacons did not have the public processional and other liturgical functions of male deacons. For example, the ordination rite, to be discussed in Section V, below, does not provide for the deaconess to read petitions and explicitly prohibits her

56. The Church of Jerusalem, although a patriarchate in its own right and politically subject to Arab Muslim rule from the seventh century, nevertheless maintained spiritual ties to the Byzantine Church and continued to be a Greek Byzantine Church. Because of pilgrimage traffic, the rites and calendar of the Church of Jerusalem, particularly in the early Byzantine period, were extensive and elaborate, and “exerted a strong liturgical influence on the other churches of the East.” Hans-Joachim Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy: Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, intro. Robert Taft (New York: Pueblo, 1980), 139. The hymnographic tradition of the monastery of St. Sabas in Palestine during the middle Byzantine period was equally influential on the Byzantine Church.

57. The *typikon* (liturgical rule or manual) describing these rites, “Τυπικὸν τῆς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις Ἐκκλησίας,” is reproduced in A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀναλέκτα ἱεροσολυμικῆς σταχυολογίας*, Vol. II (St. Petersburg: V. Kirvaoum, 1894); see especially 179–99. The manuscript dates to 1122, but in the prologue (iii) Papadopoulos-Kerameus argues that it is a copy of an earlier work from the late ninth or early tenth century, based on a prayer commemorating Patriarch Nicholas, whose patriarchate lasted from 932 to 947 (the two Latin patriarchs named Nicholas reigned several decades after the written date of the manuscript, so the commemoration cannot refer to either of them). The *typikon* in general provides the texts and rubrics (some of which may have been added in the twelfth century) for the liturgical services of the Church of Jerusalem. A summary of the material on the *myrophoroi* contained in the Jerusalem *typikon* can be found in Gabriel Bertonière, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Rome: Pontifical Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972), 193:50, n. 108. For a fuller discussion, see Karras, “Liturgical Participation,” 153–62.

58. The *solea* is the part of the nave, often set off from the rest of the nave, directly in front of (that is, to the west of) the altar area. By the tenth to twelfth century, this is typically where one would find the chanter’s stand and the bishop’s throne.

59. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀναλέκτα*, 199.

from distributing Communion during the Divine Liturgy, both of which were typical functions of the male deacon. Therefore, although they were ordained at the altar and received Communion there, there was no need for them to remain in the altar throughout the service; in fact, it would not have been practicable—or even possible—for all the large number of clergy attached to the Constantinopolitan cathedral to remain in the sanctuary throughout the liturgy.⁶⁰

Rather, according to several accounts from the middle Byzantine period, the deaconesses of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople participated in the liturgy not from within the sanctuary, but from an area just outside the sanctuary on the north aisle.⁶¹ This location, adjacent to the northern women's aisle (the *gynaeceum*⁶²) on the ground floor, indicates that their duties included general oversight or management of the *gynaeceum*, just as the *Apostolic Constitutions* prescribed for deaconesses in the early church.⁶³ In fact, in the late middle Byzantine period, at a time when female deacons had presumably devolved to a nonordained monastic order, Balsamon summed up their duties in just this way in a letter to Patriarch Mark III of Alexandria: "they ecclesiastically manage the *gynaeceum*."⁶⁴

By this time, that is, the end of the twelfth century, while deaconesses remained in the same location as earlier, they were no longer ordained and so would no longer have entered the sanctuary to receive the Eucharist. This is probably the foundation for Balsamon's assertion, in his response to Mark of Alexandria, that deaconesses did not participate (or receive Communion) at the altar⁶⁵ and that in

60. See n. 96, below.

61. See n. 19, above; also, Taft, "Women at Church," 65–70.

62. In the Great Church, as in all the large churches in the East, women and men were segregated for cultural and moral reasons; in most churches, women occupied the north side and men the south side (churches were always oriented to the east). See Sharon E. J. Gerstel, "Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998): 91–92. Taft, "Women at Church," 57, even notes a funeral rubric in an eleventh-century codex that calls for the body of the deceased to be placed on the right (south) side of the church if male, on the left (north) side if female. However, most of the textual evidence for Hagia Sophia indicates that women occupied both the north and south aisles, with men in the central portion of the nave. See Taft, "Women at Church," 34–39; and T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 130–33.

63. *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 57, 10, in SC, 320:314.

64. "τὴν γυναικωνῆτιν ἐκκλησιαστικῶς διορθούμεναι" (translation mine). Theodore Balsamon, *Responsa ad interrogationes Marci* 35, in PG 138:988. Cf. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 172.

65. "παρὰ δὲ τῇ ἀγιωτάτῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θρόνου τῶν Κωνσταντινουπολιτῶν διακόνισσαι προχειρίζονται, μίαν μὲν μετουσίαν μὴ ἔχουσαι ἐν τῷ βήματι"; Balsamon, *Responsa* 35, in PG 138:988.

general they were simply part of the congregation.⁶⁶ Balsamon's description of the liturgical functions of Byzantine deaconesses is overly narrow, though, since he omits to mention their role as chanters, as witnessed by Anthony of Novgorod.

In fact, the location of the deaconesses, adjacent to the sanctuary, was not the most practical place for women whose only duty was to keep order in the women's section of the church. On the other hand, it would have served as an indication of their clerical status. More importantly, in terms of liturgical function, it was a practical location from which to sing (directly opposite to the male readers and chanters) and also from which to approach the altar in order to receive the Eucharist with the other clergy, as the ordination rite prescribed.⁶⁷ This special liturgical space for the deaconesses, then, both remained as an institutional memory of an earlier time when female deacons were ordained and received the Eucharist as clergy, and provided an appropriate location from which to chant for women who continued to be known as deaconesses even when the title had become a monastic honorific rather than an indication of a substantively clerical office.

Given both the number and variety of primary sources attesting to the female diaconate, therefore, there is general agreement as to both the existence of deaconesses in the Byzantine Church and the nature of their various liturgical and pastoral functions. However, there has been considerable disagreement and even controversy, in academic as well as ecclesiastical circles, over such questions as (1) whether the female deacon was considered part of the clergy; (2) if so, whether the deaconess was included among the "major orders" of clergy; and (3) what light the ordination rite of the female deacon might shed on the previous two questions. It is to these issues that we now turn.

II. THE FEMALE DEACON AS CLERGY

The clerical status of the female deacon in the Byzantine Church is clear for the early period. Even a canon from the Council of Nicaea (the first ecumenical council), held in 325, stating that certain deaconesses were not ordained, interpreted in its context implies the clerical, ordained status of female deacons in the catholic Church. This canon 19 regulated the manner in which Paulianist clergy were to be received into the catholic Church, requiring re-baptism and re-ordination,

66. "ἐκκλησιάζουσαι δὲ τὰ πολλὰ"; *ibid.*

67. See Section V, below.

and administering the latter only for those who are found worthy.⁶⁸ Deaconesses were specifically banned from ordination because, the canon states, "since they have received no laying on of hands [*cheirothesian tina*], [they] are thus therefore to be counted among the laity."⁶⁹

The pertinent question here is, which deaconesses "have received no laying on of hands"? Aimé Georges Martimort, rather than considering the question of which deaconesses are the subject of the final sentence of the canon,⁷⁰ focuses instead on a phrase from the previous sentence, which calls for the same form to be observed for deaconesses and all other clergy. Then, rather than applying this clause to the re-baptism and potential re-ordination of Paulianist clergy, which has just been discussed, he instead interprets it as indication that the manner of ordination in the catholic and Paulianist Churches was the same for deaconesses and other clergy, thus reading the canon to mean that *neither* the Paulianists nor the catholic Church ordained women as deacons: "No more than before, however, did they receive any laying on of hands or become a part of the κληρος [clergy]."⁷¹ However, the fact that deaconesses were singled out for special mention precisely *because* they had not been ordained makes it clear that there was a difference in practice here between the two churches; that is, either the Paulianists or the catholic Church considered deaconesses a nonclerical order and hence did not confer ordination on them. If both churches had viewed them as nonclergy, there would have been no reason to mention them at all.⁷²

68. Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 2:435; Carl J. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1873), 1:427.

69. *Ibid.*; Eng. trans. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 102.

70. By contrast, Jerome Cotsonis, "A Contribution to the Interpretation of the 10th Canon of the First Ecumenical Council," *Revue des études byzantines* (*Mélanges Raymond Janin*) 19 (1961): 190, immediately observes that one of the important questions in this canon is "whether the word refers to the deaconesses of the Paulianists only or to those of the Church too." Unfortunately, Martimort nowhere refers to or cites in his discussion the Cotsonis article, although it was published two decades before Martimort's work. See also Theodorou, "(Χειροτονία) ἢ (χειροθεσία)," 27–32.

71. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 103. Kalsbach, *Altkirchliche Einrichtung*, 46–49, and Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 48–49, reason similarly. See Cipriano Vagaggini, "L'ordinazione," 155–56.

72. Cotsonis, "Contribution," 190, observes that an assumption that deaconesses in general were not ordained "makes the rest of the text of the canon contradictory to itself. For at the beginning of the same sentence it appears that the canon regards deaconesses as members of the clergy while later it would seem prepared to consider them as being classed merely among the laity." Similarly, Vagaggini, "L'ordinazione," 155–60, notes the illogical contortions to which other, earlier scholars have gone in order to interpret this canon in a way that excludes deaconesses from the clergy, including theorizing different types of deaconesses.

Furthermore, if it were the catholic Church that did not ordain deaconesses or consider them to be clergy, there would have been no reason to mention them since the required re-ordination for Paulianist clergy would have been impossible in the case of the deaconess; everyone would already know that they had lay status.⁷³ The logical inference, then, is that the canon excluded Paulianist deaconesses from the re-ordination possible for other orders because, since they were not ordained in the Paulianist Church, they were considered laypersons, not ordained clergy, even in the heretical church. In other words, the purpose of this canon, as with many of those dealing with the Montanist Church in North Africa, was to try as much as possible to integrate heretical clergy into the catholic clergy so that they could remain with their communities; in the case of deaconesses, however, while it was possible for them to continue their ministry, it was impossible to consider their ministry to be a clerical one, as in the catholic Church, since the Paulianist deaconesses were not ordained clergy.

Jerome Cotsonis provides a particularly attractive solution along these lines by proposing that the text of the canon was corrupted early in its manuscript history. He suggests replacing *tina* [feminine accusative singular of the indefinite article] in the final sentence with *tines* [feminine nominative plural], so that the final sentence would read, "since *some of these women* have received no laying on of hands [*cheirothesian tines*], [they] are thus therefore to be counted among the laity."⁷⁴ Thus, it is apparent that, already by the time of the First Ecumenical Council, female deacons were ordained members of the

73. This is the problem with the interpretation of the canon suggested by L'Huillier, *Church of the Ancient Councils*, 82–83. L'Huillier argues that, since there is no extant ordination rite for female deacons before the *Apostolic Constitutions* (citing the lack of one in the *Apostolic Tradition*), it was probably the Paulianists who had ordained female deacons as opposed to the catholic Church. He furthermore suggests that, "if this phrase concerns deaconesses in general, maybe the fathers of Nicaea wanted to remind people that this type of ministry did not have a priestly character properly speaking," 83. However, the *Apostolic Tradition* is the only extant document containing ordination rites earlier than the *Apostolic Constitutions*; the absence of an ordination rite for deaconesses in this one work does not exclude the possibility of the ordination of deaconesses in other geographical areas, particularly the East. Indeed, it is unlikely that the *Apostolic Constitutions* would include an ordination rite for female deacons only a couple of decades—at most—after the Council of Nicaea in 325 if canon 19 were truly meant to be interpreted as a reminder of a long-standing blanket exclusion of ordained women deacons. (As with Martimort, L'Huillier appears unaware of the Cotsonis article.)

74. Cotsonis, "Contribution," 197. His solution is more plausible than the attempt of Gelasius, in his *Church History*, and two ancient Latin translators to solve the problem by changing the first reference from "deaconesses" to "deacons." See the discussion in L'Huillier, *Church of the Ancient Councils*, 82 and 99, nn. 392 and 393.

clergy, thus necessitating the special provision in canon 19 for women called "deaconesses" in the Paulianist Church who, however, were *not* ordained. The clerical status of deaconesses is even clearer in canon 15 of the Council of Chalcedon, in the middle of the fifth century, which clearly assumed female deacons were ordained clergy who exercised a ministry.⁷⁵

III. THE FEMALE DIACONATE AS A "MAJOR ORDER"

That the deaconess was included not just among the clergy, but specifically among the major orders of clergy, is even more indisputable as one moves further into the Byzantine period. First it is necessary to review the distinction between the two general levels of ordained orders.⁷⁶ All ordained orders had liturgical and/or sacramental functions more or less unique to each. Nevertheless, there were differences in ordination rite and in liturgical function that allow several orders to be grouped together. In the case of the distinction between "major" and "minor" orders, to use more modern terminology, the differences appear to be ones of degree or centrality of function, especially liturgical or sacramental function.⁷⁷ For instance, in the Byzantine Church,⁷⁸ only bishops, presbyters, and deacons could read the petitions of the liturgy.⁷⁹ Those three orders also received the Eucharist at the altar and could distribute it to others,

75. "Διάκονον μὴ χειροτονεῖσθαι γυναῖκα πρὸ ἐτῶν τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ταύτην μετὰ ἀκριβοῦς δοκιμασίας." See n. 13, above. In this regard, L'Huillier, *Church of the Ancient Councils*, 245, argues that "the text of canon 15 of Chalcedon leaves no doubt about the sacramental nature of the feminine diaconate. . . . It is, therefore, clear that at least at this period in the East, we are not dealing with an inferior order."

76. The distinctions which are clear by the end of the middle Byzantine period are incipient but not so clear in the late antique period. In a response to Martimort, written as an appendix to the English translation of his book, Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 117–18, notes that distinctions between levels of clergy are evident in such early texts as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, but faults Martimort (*Deaconesses*, 75) for failing to consider the differences on their own terms, instead anachronistically applying modern views of ordination and of levels of clergy to the early period: "I believe that 'the concepts of our modern theology' have nothing to do with determining how the *Apostolic Constitutions* regarded the ordination of deaconesses. One cannot say that because our theology is reluctant to accept this ordination as sacramental, the same as that of the male deacons, the *Apostolic Constitutions* could not consider it such." It is possible, however, to recognize differences in clerical levels based on contemporaneous evidence, not on anachronistic applications of modern theology and practice.

77. See, for example, Frank Hawkins, "Orders and Ordination in the New Testament," in *The Study of Liturgy*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 301–20.

78. While this discussion concerns the historical Byzantine Church, the distinctions drawn in this and the following paragraph apply to the modern Eastern Orthodox Church as well.

79. See, for example, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in Goar, *Euchologion*, 47–69.

while those in minor orders received Communion with the laity and could not commune others. These differences in liturgical function were reflected in the various rites of ordination.⁸⁰

Moreover, beyond the distinction between major and minor orders, a further distinction must be drawn within the major orders between the diaconate, on the one hand, and the presbytery and episcopacy, on the other hand. Of course, each order had its own character and uniqueness. However, there was a liturgical and sacramental connection between bishop and presbyter that excluded the deacon, already evident in the early church.⁸¹ So, for example, while the deacon could give a blessing in a nonliturgical context, he did not do so during the liturgy, where only the presbyter or bishop could formally bless.⁸² Also, while deacons read the petitions at liturgical services, they did not read the liturgical prayers (including the consecration prayer during the liturgy), which were for presbyter or bishop only; nor could deacons baptize.⁸³ At times, the diaconate seemed to straddle not only the division between major and minor orders, but even the distinction between clergy and laity. For instance, the rites of the Byzantine Church provided a distinct funeral service for presbyters and, by extension, bishops;⁸⁴ deacons, by contrast, were buried according to the rubrics for the laity.

These limitations on the deacon's liturgical role were manifestations of a fundamental liturgical difference between the diaconate and the other two major orders: the deacon could not act as celebrant of any of the sacraments.⁸⁵ After all, in its origin, the diaconate's primary

80. Goar, *Euchologion*, 65–67; the text of the liturgy assumes that both a presbyter and a deacon are serving. Functions of lower orders may be assumed by higher orders, but not vice versa. Thus, the deacon's role (petitions, and so on) would be assumed by a presbyter or bishop serving alone; by contrast, a deacon could not baptize or celebrate the Eucharist. The specific characteristics of the ordination rites are discussed in Section IV, below.

81. Hawkins, "Orders and Ordination," 304.

82. This was typically seen in those few instances where the bishop or presbyter turned to the faithful (the celebrant typically stood at the altar facing east in the same manner as the laity), perhaps made a gesture of blessing (the rubrics are not always specific), and said to the congregation, "Peace be with you" (Εἰρήνη πάνσι). According to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII, 3, 28, in SC 336:230, blessing was reserved to bishops and presbyters; neither the male nor the female deacon was to bless congregants.

83. *Apostolic Constitutions*, III, 11, in SC 329:146; deacons were permitted only to assist bishops and presbyters. The Latin Church by the medieval period allowed deacons to baptize, but this expansion of the diaconal role never occurred in the East.

84. Goar, *Euchologion*, 451–65.

85. This may be seen in the numerous sacraments and other services in the Goar *Euchologion*. Unlike the Latin Church, the Byzantine Church did not allow a deacon to serve as a witness to matrimony. This was because, as an Orthodox sacramental theology of marriage developed, the cleric marrying the couple was, as with the other sacraments, viewed as the celebrant (note the structure of the wedding—"crowning"—service, in

ministry—as the name suggests—was meant to be pastoral.⁸⁶ By contrast, both presbyter and bishop exercised primary sacramental and liturgical functions, although the distinction between the two orders was unclear (and perhaps nonexistent) in the New Testament church.⁸⁷ Gradually, the presbyters clearly came to be under the authority of the bishop⁸⁸ and to celebrate the sacraments in the stead of the bishop, who alone retained the sacramental authority to ordain.⁸⁹ Thus, it was not coincidental that the presbyter acquired the name “priest” (*hiereus*) and that one of the alternatives to the standard term for bishop (*episkopos*) became “archpriest” (*archiereus*).

Where, then, did the Byzantine deaconess fit in this distinction between major and minor orders? The organization of ordination rites in the Byzantine *euchologia* is informative. Most are organized in descending order,⁹⁰ that is, from presbyter to deacon and deaconess, then to the lower orders of subdeacon, chanter, and reader. Others reverse the order; thus, Goar’s *euchologion*, relying principally on the eleventh-century Grottaferrata *euchologion* from Constantinople, organizes the ordination rites in ascending order, from reader and chanter, to deputy and candle bearer, to subdeacon, and then within “major orders” from deacon to *deaconess* to various ecclesiastical officials (such as archdeacon), to presbyter and finally bishop.⁹¹ What is striking is that, even when the rites are organized in ascending order, the ordination of the female deacon is always placed directly after that of the male deacon. This consistent placement manifestly demonstrates that male and female deacons were considered to be of essentially the same rank or order.⁹²

Moreover, the mid-sixth-century legislation of Justinian provides perhaps the most incontrovertible evidence, outside of the rubrics of the ordination rite itself, that the female deacon in the Byzantine Church not only was regarded as a member of the clergy, but was

ibid., 314–25). By contrast, the Latin Church continued the late antique philosophy embedded in civil law that viewed marriage essentially as an oath or contract; thus, the celebrants were the couple itself, with the cleric acting primarily as witness.

86. *Diakonos* (διάκονος) means “servant”; Acts 6:1–6. For a somewhat controversial revisionist interpretation of the meaning of the term, see John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

87. Hawkins, “Orders and Ordination,” 293–97.

88. This had occurred for at least some of the churches of Asia Minor by the end of the first century, to judge by the letters of Ignatius of Antioch.

89. *Apostolic Constitutions*, III, 11, in SC 329:146.

90. For example, the ordination rites in the eighth-century Barberini *euchologion*, contained in secs. 159–66, follow this descending order; *Barberini*, 178–90.

91. Goar, *Euchologion*, 194–261.

92. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 151, notes that, in all but one manuscript from the Byzantine period (Sinai gr. 956), this is the case. He draws no conclusions from this, however.

ranked with the major orders of clergy.⁹³ In his Novel 3, the emperor included female deacons among the clergy whose numbers he regulated for the Great Church of Hagia Sophia,⁹⁴ in the prologue listing male and female deacons together,⁹⁵ and later specifying one hundred male and forty female deacons for Hagia Sophia.⁹⁶

Of course, the term “clergy” included both major and minor orders; thus, Novel 3 regulated subdeacons, readers, and chanters, as well as presbyters and deacons (doorkeepers are listed after the total of clergy). However, it is clear, for two reasons, that Justinian ranked the female deacon among the major orders of clergy. First, he consistently listed the female deacon together with the male deacon when discussing clergy in general, normally using the first-declension *diakonos* with the feminine article, although occasionally the feminized noun *diakonissa* was used (sometimes within the same piece of legislation).⁹⁷

Secondly, in Novel 6, the emperor set forth the rules regarding the ordination⁹⁸ of *higher* clergy, limiting the novel to bishops, presbyters, and deacons, both male and female. In fact, the novel is entitled, “Regarding how it is necessary for bishops and presbyters and male and female deacons to be ordained.”⁹⁹ That Justinian—and, thus, presumably the Byzantine Church as a whole¹⁰⁰—considered deaconesses to be part of the higher clergy is further underscored by his prefatory remarks in this novel about the *hierosynē*, or “priesthood” in its broad sense.¹⁰¹ Considering that the novel was limited to the episcopacy, presbyterate, and diaconate, this indicates Justinian’s *hierosynē* to be analogous to what today is termed “major orders.”

However, it appears from other legislation that, although deaconesses were obviously considered part of the clergy, and the higher clergy at that, Justinian and others were not entirely comfortable with

93. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 109–12, discusses Justinian’s novellae but in this context completely sidesteps the question of whether the female diaconate was considered a major order.

94. CIC, vol. 3, *Novellae*, eds. Rudolf Schoell and Guilelmus Kroll (Berlin: Weidmann, 1959), 18.

95. “πόσους δὲ διακόνους, ἀρρενίας τε καὶ θηλείας”; CIC 3:19.

96. Nov. 3, 1, in CIC 3:21. Since the novel limits presbyters to 60, male deacons to 100, female deacons to 40, subdeacons to 90, readers to 110, and chanters to 25, it is clear that female deacons are included among the “most reverend clergy” totaling 425 persons. This novel was reiterated in the *Basilics* III, 2, 1.

97. For example, Nov. 6, 6, in CIC 3:43–45.

98. The Greek word consistently used is χειροτονία, not χειροθεσία; the potential significance of these two terms will be discussed in Section IV, below; see especially n. 124.

99. CIC 3:35.

100. There is no indication that Justinian or any other emperor attempted to impose drastic liturgical change on the Church through legislation; therefore, the logical assumption is that his categorization of the female diaconate reflects the theology of orders of the Byzantine Church generally.

101. CIC 3:35–36.

the idea. The cultural notions that female nature was morally "weaker,"¹⁰² and that male headship—especially in church affairs—needed to be exercised over women who were either lustful or susceptible to seduction,¹⁰³ no doubt influenced Justinian as well as the church as a whole. That women were ordained to major orders likely multiplied the trepidation hierarchs and emperors felt in this regard.

Such cultural biases account for the double standards adhered to for male and female deacons. The requirements for entry to the female diaconate were far more restrictive than for the male diaconate, even in late antiquity, and the penalties for misconduct by female deacons were far more severe than for their male counterparts. As with the other clergy in major orders, female deacons could not marry after their ordination (by contrast, members of all minor orders except subdeacons were permitted to marry).¹⁰⁴ Unlike the male clergy, however, married women could not become deaconesses unless they were separated from their husbands (as with the wives of bishops). As mentioned earlier, deaconesses—just as enrolled widows—originally had to be at least sixty years old;¹⁰⁵ later the age was lowered first to fifty¹⁰⁶ and then to forty.¹⁰⁷

102. For more on late antique and Byzantine notions of the inherent weakness of women, see, for example, part 2, chap. 1, "Incapacités ou exclusions?" in Joëlle Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e–7e siècle)*, vol. 2, *Les pratiques sociales*, Trauvieux et mémoires, Monograph 6 (Paris: De Boccard, 1992), 273–93; and Hélène Saradi-Mendelovici, "L' 'infirmis sexus' présumée de la moniale Byzantine: doctrine ascétique et pratique juridique," in *Les femmes et le monachisme byzantin*, ed. Jacques Perreault (Athens: Canadian Archeological Institute, 1991), 87–97. Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 56–62, discusses for late antiquity in general the ambivalence toward the notion of female weakness expressed in law and practice.

103. This philosophy was rooted biblically in 1 Tim. 2:11–12, where women are forbidden to teach because Eve was deceived (hence, she "taught" Adam badly). See, for example, John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 3, 2, in PG 48:633.

104. Can. 15 of Chalcedon; in Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 1:528. Justinian's Nov. 6, 6, in CIC 3:43–44. See Joëlle Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e–7e siècle)*, vol. 1, *Le droit imperial*. Travaux et mémoires, Monograph 5 (Paris: De Boccard, 1990), 183; Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 109–10. For a more general discussion of the restriction on higher clergy's marrying after ordination, see Patrick Demetrios Viscuso, "A Byzantine Theology of Marriage: The 'Syntagma kata stoicheion' of Matthew Blastares" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1989), 90–92.

105. See n. 12, above. Theodosius specifically refers to the Apostle Paul's minimum for Widows. Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 70, notes that the fifth-century Byzantine historian Sozomen, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, 7, 16, 8–11 (Sozomen, GCS, 4:323–24), credits a scandal in the capital with provoking Theodosius to set such a high minimum age. The connection is unclear since, according to Sozomen, the incident involved not a deaconess but an upper-class woman who accused a male deacon of sexual misconduct in connection with a penance prescribed to her by a priest, who was defrocked. See Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 148, n. 246; Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme*, 2:355.

106. Nov. 6, 6, in CIC 3:43.

107. However, there were exceptions, such as Olympias, the close friend of St. John Chrysostom, who was widowed quite young and was ordained a deaconess at the age

Judging from the age and marital restrictions, it would appear that the purpose of these restrictions was to ensure that female deacons were as chaste and sexually nonthreatening—perhaps even asexual—as possible.¹⁰⁸ This would also explain why the punishment for sexual misconduct was far harsher for deaconesses than for the male clergy, exemplified most starkly by a provision in Justinian's Novel 6, promulgated in 535, which prescribed the death penalty for any deaconess who broke her vow of celibacy by marrying or engaging in fornication.¹⁰⁹ Such a penalty was far harsher than for laywomen guilty of fornication;¹¹⁰ it was also far harsher than for fornicating subdeacons, deacons, and priests, who were simply reduced to lay status.¹¹¹ Justinian asserted that the deaconess' crime was similar to that of unchaste Vestal Virgins in pagan times and thus deserved the same capital punishment.¹¹² Later emperors lessened the severity of punishment, but even confiscation of property was more severe than the penalty for males committing the same crime.¹¹³ In practice, however, misbehaving deaconesses may have

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- of twenty-nine or thirty, at about the same time that Theodosius enacted the law setting the minimum age at sixty. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom*, 112; Elm, *Virgins of God*, 179. Another exception was Irene of Chrysobalanton, who was probably in her early to mid twenties at the time of her ordination. Rosenqvist, *The Life of St Irene*, 28–29, n. 8.
108. It would be anachronistic, particularly for the Constantinopolitan Church, to read into these age restrictions the issue of ritual impurity associated with menstruation. Except for a longstanding, very restrictive tradition in Alexandria and a caution in the fifth-century *Testamentum Domini*, of Syrian provenance, against ordained Widows' approaching the altar during their menses, there is no indication of liturgical restrictions on menstruants in the Byzantine Church prior to the ninth century. To the contrary, church orders from the early Byzantine period in the area of Antioch denounced the imposition of Levitical notions of impurity, explicitly including menstruation. See Section V, below. For more on this subject, see Joan Branham, "Bloody Women and Bloody Spaces: Menses and the Eucharist in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 30:4 (spring 2002): 15–22; Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 273–99; G. L. C. Frank, "Menstruation and Motherhood: Christian Attitudes in Late Antiquity," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 19:2 (1993): 185–208; Karras, "The Liturgical Participation of Women," chap. 3, "The Ritual Impurity of Women: Blood and Birth," 88–135; and Patrick Viscuso, "Menstruation: A Problem in Late Byzantine Canon Law," *Études byzantines* (forthcoming). Note that Cohen and Frank treat only the late antique period.
109. "αὐταὶ τε ἑνοχοὶ γενήσονται θανάτου." Nov. 6, 6, in CIC 3:44–45. See Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme*, 1:183.
110. *Ibid.*
111. Nov. 6, 5, in CIC 3:42–43; see also Nov. 22, 42, in CIC 3:176.
112. CIC 3:45. By contrast, canon 44 of Basil prescribes seven years' excommunication for a deaconess guilty of fornication with a pagan; Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 1:593. See Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme*, 2:354; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 105.
113. Cf. Novel 123, chaps. 14, 29, and 30, in CIC 3:605, 616. Confiscation of the property of a wayward deaconess was retained in the *Basilics* III, 1, 46. For any man who raped a deaconess, nun, or other consecrated woman, the penalty was confiscation of the rapist's property; Nov. 123, chap. 43; *Basilics* IV, 1, 15.

been treated more similarly to male clergy than the imperial legislation would suggest; Joëlle Beaucamp observes that the punishment usually found in the hagiographic literature for sexually misbehaving deaconesses and nuns is defrocking or expulsion from the monastery, respectively.¹¹⁴ Eleven years after Novel 6, Justinian himself, through Novel 123, reduced the penalties in cases where sexual impropriety was unclear. Nevertheless, while the penalties in such cases were similar to those of adultery for laywomen, they were still more severe than for male clerics guilty of the same misconduct.¹¹⁵

Thus, female deacons in the Byzantine Church were restricted in a number of ways in which male deacons were not, apparently because of their incongruous position as women clergy. At the same time, however, it appears that the severity with which deaconesses were regulated was itself a further indication of their rank as members of the higher clergy. Ultimately, however, while the legislative and other material above points clearly to their status as members of major orders, the most telling evidence comes from the ordination rite itself.

IV. THE ORDINATION OF THE BYZANTINE DEACONESS

While the categorization of ordained orders into “major” and “minor” is anachronistic, the idea is not new of distinguishing ranks of clergy by differences in the rite of ordination, as well as by liturgical function. Hence, the crucible for the controversy over the status of the female diaconate in the early and Byzantine Church has been the rite of ordination. As early as the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*,¹¹⁶ there are clear differences between the ordinations of presbyter and

114. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme*, 2:340. Beaucamp, *ibid.*, 276, n. 34, also cites Sozomen (*Ecclesiastical History* IV, 24, 16, in GCS, 4:181), who mentions a deaconess named Nektaria, who was excommunicated for violating her “contracts” (συνθήκαι) and “vows” (ὄρκου).

115. The penalties under Novel 123 were similar to those that soon after would be instituted for adultery (that is, imprisonment in a monastery and loss of property). But, Beaucamp notes that this novel (chaps. 14 and 29), as with Novel 6, again is more lenient with male clerics (priests, deacons, and subdeacons), requiring only their defrocking and turning over their property to the diocese that they served. In other words, male clerics retained their personal freedom, including their freedom to marry. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme*, 2:184; see also 210. L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 247, similarly comments on the severity of canonical punishment in canon 15 of Chalcedon for deaconesses who marry (defrocking and excommunication) vis-à-vis their male counterparts (defrocking only), but he theorizes unconvincingly that its rationale lies in the maturity expected of the deaconess because of her greater age.

The symbolic status of deaconesses and other consecrated women with respect to the honor of the Church, “as the bride of Christ,” can also be discerned in the harsh penalty (cutting off the nose) prescribed in the ninth-century *Basilics* for those who behaved lewdly toward these women. *Basilics* LX, 37, 76.

116. VIII, 16–21, in SC 336:216–22.

deacon, on the one hand, and those of subdeacon and reader, on the other hand.¹¹⁷ The ordination rites in the document are brief, omitting most rubrics and not even describing when the ordination is to be performed (that is, its larger liturgical context).

Nevertheless, there are discernible differences for different levels of clergy. The rubrics for the ordination of presbyter and deacon call for the candidate to be ordained "in the presence of" those of their own order and above.¹¹⁸ For example, the deacon is to be ordained by the bishop's laying hands on him "in the presence of the whole presbytery, and of the deacons."¹¹⁹ By contrast, the rites for subdeacon and reader call for the bishop simply to lay hands upon the candidate.¹²⁰ Although there are no rubrics describing where these ordinations take place, the phrase "in the presence of" the other higher clergy implies that the ordinations of presbyter, deacon, and deaconess probably were performed in the altar area, where the other clergy would have been present at the *synthronon*.¹²¹ In the case of the deaconess, the *Apostolic Constitutions* calls for the bishop to "lay thy hands upon in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and deaconesses."¹²² Thus, even the meager information gleaned from the *Apostolic Constitutions'* ordination rite for the deaconess suggests that the deaconess was placed among the major orders.¹²³

117. The liminal position of the deaconess has engendered vociferous disagreement over her status. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 84, declines to participate in the debate between Gryson and Martimort over whether the deaconess in the *Apostolic Constitutions* was sacramentally ordained, arguing that such a debate "may not only be anachronistic but also oversimplistic: the categorization of the liturgical ministries of the early Church cannot be reduced to a simple division between clergy and laity."

118. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 69, notes this distinction, but fails to comment on it with respect to the ordination of the deaconess, whereas Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 115–20, finds it suggestive of the higher clerical status of the deaconess. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 85, notes the similarities between the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the later Byzantine rite both in the analogous general structure and in the minor differences between the ordination rites of deacon and deaconess.

119. *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII, 17, in SC 336:218; Eng. trans. "Apostolic Constitutions," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter ANF), vol. 7, reprint ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 492.

120. VIII, 20–21, in SC 336:220–22.

121. The *synthronon* was a type of mini-amphitheater, that is, a series of raised levels in a semicircular shape, lining the sanctuary apse in early Christian churches in the East. This architectural feature may still be seen in certain ancient churches, such as Hagia Eirene in Constantinople (Istanbul). See Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 143–52.

122. VIII, 19, in SC 336:220; Eng. trans. ANF 7:492.

123. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, observes that "the word 'ordination' [*cheirotomia*] does not appear at the beginning of the instruction concerning deaconesses" and suggests that "this omission may be intended to indicate a subtle distinction in status." However, he

By the middle Byzantine period, the distinction is clearer between major and minor orders, in part through increasing, though not yet complete, consistency in the use of the ordination terms *cheirotomia* and *cheirothesia*.¹²⁴ In his seminal work on the distinctions between these two types of ordination, Greek theologian and church historian Panayiotis Trembelas notes that the *cheirothesia* rite—for ordination to lower orders—is characterized principally by (1) its physical location outside the *bema* (altar area); and (2) its temporal location outside of the divine liturgy.¹²⁵ By contrast, the *cheirotomia* type of ordination—that is, for major orders—occurs at the *bema* and in the course of the Divine Liturgy;¹²⁶ in addition, there is an allusion to the candidate's election to the clerical order. The terms were still in flux in the middle Byzantine period—for example, *cheirotomia* was used in the *euchologia* for the subdeacon's ordination, although it followed the *cheirothesia* format¹²⁷—but the distinction Trembelas draws on the basis of physical and liturgical location is clear and consistent. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons were ordained at the altar in the course of the liturgy; subdeacons, readers, and so on, were not.

It is easier to distinguish among the orders for the middle Byzantine period than for the early church or early Byzantine period based on these ritual characteristics because the rubrics for the various ordinations are much fuller and more specific in the Byzantine *euchologia* than in the earlier *Apostolic Constitutions*. Two important *euchologia* from the middle Byzantine period that preserve the ordination rite of the female deacon together with other major and minor orders

does not respond to Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 118, who, upon examination of the critical apparatus, concluded "that the formulas in question *peri de cheirotomias presbyterōn* and others were wrongly inserted by Funk in the current text, and that in fact, these titles had been introduced later on into part of the manuscript tradition." See Francis X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1905). Marcel Metzger's more recent critical edition, in SC 336, reproduces the same titles. The apparatus shows that the wording in these section titles is variable in the manuscript traditions, so Gryson may be correct; Funk and Metzger's editorial choices could have been predicated on the assumption that women were not truly ordained.

124. For a thorough discussion of the history of the use of these two terms and of their significance in terms of the distinction in ordination rites, see Panagiotis Trembelas, "Τάξεις χειροθεσιῶν καὶ χειροτομιῶν," *Theologia* 19:2-3; 20:1 (1941-48; 1949); Cyrille Vogel, "Chirotonie et chirothésie: Importance et relativité du geste de l'imposition des mains dans la collation des ordres," *Irénikon* 45 (1972): 7-21, 207-38; and Vagaggini, "L'ordinazione," 179-80, esp. n. 2. Vogel, 10, observes that the distinction in meaning between these two heretofore interchangeable terms begins in the eighth century and even then only in some juridical and didactic works. L'Huillier, *Church of the Ancient Councils*, 243, agrees with Vogel regarding the instability of the two terms prior to the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787).

125. Trembelas, "Τάξεις," 452.

126. Trembelas, "Τάξεις," 456; Taft, "Women at Church," 63-64.

127. Barberini, 188; Goar, *Euchologion*, 203.

are the eighth-century Barberini codex 336¹²⁸ from a Greek-speaking region of Italy and an eleventh-century codex from Constantinople, Grottaferrata G.b.I., the primary manuscript source for the massive *euchologion* collection published by Goar in the seventeenth century.¹²⁹ The rites and prayers for the ordination of the deaconess in the two manuscripts are identical. Given their geographic and chronological separation, this indicates that in the Byzantine period the ordination rite for the female diaconate was widespread and standardized, thereby suggesting that so was the order itself.¹³⁰

As for the content of the ordination rite for the female deacon, the most outstanding feature is that, far more explicitly than in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, its structure is analogous to the ordination of the male deacon; in fact, while the prayers are distinct for the two ordinations, the wording of the rubrics is virtually identical,¹³¹ a point underscored in Goar by a separate, short set of rubrics that instructed that "One must perform [the ordination rite] for the deaconess as for male deacons, except for a few things."¹³²

According to the Barberini and Grottaferrata *euchologia*, the deaconess was ordained during the Eucharist, at exactly the same point in the liturgy as for the male deacon—that is, immediately following the end

128. The ordination rite for the deaconess is found in secs. 163–64, in *Barberini*, 185–88.

129. This manuscript is also known as the Bessarion codex; the ordination of the deaconess appears in Goar, *Euchologion*, 218–22. The ordination rites are preserved in a third principal *euchologion*, Paris BN Coislin 213, written in 1027, but it is very similar to the Grottaferrata manuscript; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 7. There is also a tenth-century manuscript from the library of the monastery of St. Katherine, known as Sinai 956, and several late Byzantine manuscripts. For a discussion of these, see Miguel Arranz, "Les sacrements de l'ancien euchologe constantinopolitain (1)," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 48 (1982): 284–335, and Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 150, regarding the placement of the ordination rite. Theodorou, "(Χειροτονία) ἡ (χειροθεσία)," 576–88, analyzes the texts specifically with reference to the ordination rite for the deaconess.

130. Caution should be exercised due to the archaizing tendency of the Byzantines; thus, the tendency to preserve texts intact may simply mean that the female diaconate was indeed widespread in the early Byzantine period but may not necessarily indicate that this was still the case at the time the *euchologia* were written. For instance, regarding Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De administrando imperio*, sister volume to his *De ceremoniis*, Alexander Kazhdan notes in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, eds. Alexander P. Kazhdan and others (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1:593, that "one must distinguish between the date of compilation . . . and the date of texts included." Nevertheless, on the basis of the *vita* of St. Irene Chrysobalanton, as well as the fragmentary but presumably reliable sigillographic and diplomatic evidence from Byzantine Italy (see nn. 36, 42, and 47, above), we know that at least through the eighth century in southern Italy and the ninth or tenth century in Constantinople and Jerusalem, some women were still being ordained as deacons.

131. Taft, "Women at Church," 63, asserts that "the detailed rubrics . . . show an almost exact parallelism between the rite for instituting deacons and deaconesses."

132. Goar, *Euchologion*, 219. A canonist of the fourteenth century, Matthew Blastares, *Collectio alphabetica*, letter Γ, chap. 11, quotes this text almost verbatim; in PG 144:1176.

of the *anaphora* section, after the royal doors are reopened.¹³³ As with the male deacon, she was brought to the archbishop¹³⁴ (an indication that the ordination occurred at the altar, where he would be at that point in the liturgy¹³⁵). She bent her head as the archbishop placed his hand on it; then, making a cross three times (presumably, over her head), the archbishop read the following prayer:

Holy and almighty God, who through the birth of your only-begotten Son and our God from the Virgin according to the flesh sanctified the female, and not to men alone but also to women bestowed grace and the advent of your Holy Spirit; now, Lord, look upon this your servant and call her to the work of your diaconate, and send down upon her the abundant gift of your Holy Spirit; keep her in orthodox faith, in blameless conduct, always fulfilling her ministry according to your pleasure; because to you is due all glory and honor . . .¹³⁶

There followed a litany, with the sixth petition specifically on behalf of the “now appointed deaconess, and her salvation. That our loving God will bestow on her a spotless and irreproachable diaconate, [let us pray] to the Lord.”¹³⁷ With the archbishop again placing his hand on the head of the woman he was ordaining, he followed the litany with a second consecration prayer:

Lord, Lord, who do not reject women offering themselves and wishing to minister in your holy houses in accordance with what is fitting, but receive them in an order of ministers; bestow the grace of your Holy Spirit also on this your servant who wishes to offer herself to you, and fill her with the grace of the diaconate, as you gave the grace of your diaconate to Phoebe whom you called to the work of

133. Bar. 163.2, in *Barberini*, 185; Goar, *Euchologion*, 218. The *anaphora* is the central portion of the Divine Liturgy, culminating in the consecration of the bread and wine.

134. The Barberini codex consistently uses the word “archbishop” (ἀρχιεπίσκοπος), while the Grottaferrata manuscript used by Goar primarily uses “archbishop,” but occasionally “bishop.” The use of the word “archbishop” probably indicates the *euchologion*’s original provenance of Constantinople.

135. Literally, she is “offered” (προσφέρεται), or perhaps “offers herself”; Bar. 163.2, in *Barberini*, 185; *Euchologion*, 218. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 172, quotes Balsamon, *Responsa* 35, in PG 138:988, as asserting, in answer to a question posed him by Patriarch Mark III of Alexandria, that “formerly [πάλαι] there were sometimes recognized orders [τάγματα] of deaconesses, and they too had their place in the sanctuary [βαθμὸν ἐν τῷ βήματι].” Remarkably, Martimort states that Theodore is wrong because “at no time did deaconesses in the Byzantine rite ever have access to the sanctuary,” despite his earlier admission (152) that, “even if the place of ordination was not always specified, . . . that place was evidently the sanctuary, because the doors remained open and the candidate had to advance toward the bishop; nowhere is it specified that the bishop had to leave the altar.”

136. Bar. 163.3, in *Barberini*, 185–86; Goar, *Euchologion*, 218; Eng. trans. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 138.

137. Bar. 164.6, in *Barberini*, 186; Goar, *Euchologion*, 218; Eng. trans. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 138.

ministry. Grant to her, O God, to persevere blamelessly in your holy temples, to cultivate appropriate conduct, and especially moderation, and make your servant perfect, that standing at the judgment-seat of your Christ she may receive the worthy reward of her good conduct. By the mercy and love for humanity of your only-begotten Son . . .¹³⁸

After the "amen," the archbishop then vested the ordinand with the diaconal *orarion* (a long stole symbolic of the diaconal office), placing it around her neck, under her *maphorion*, and bringing the two ends of the stole around to the front.¹³⁹ Finally, the newly ordained female deacon received Communion at the hand of the archbishop, who then gave her the chalice, which she received and placed back on the altar.¹⁴⁰ In addition, at the end of the ordination rite for the male deacon (that is, immediately before the ordination rite for the deaconess), there is a postscript in both the Barberini and Grottaferrata codices noting that this is the ritual for ordaining a deacon or deaconess during the normal divine liturgy,¹⁴¹ but that the ordination may also be done during a presanctified liturgy, the only difference being that the placement of the ordination during the service is slightly different because there is no *anaphora* in a presanctified liturgy.¹⁴²

The similarities between the texts for the ordination of deacon and deaconess are striking. The prayers are different¹⁴³ but contain the same basic elements, including an *epiclesis* (invocation of the Holy Spirit) and a reference to God's calling them to this office. The litany is identical, with the obvious exception of the use of the feminine form when referring to the ordinand in the sixth petition. In terms of rubrics, there are only a few differences: (1) the deaconess bowed her head instead of kneeling; (2) she was not vested with a liturgical tunic,¹⁴⁴ and the way in which she was vested with the *orarion* was different from the male deacon; (3) the deaconess was not given a kiss

138. Bar. 164.10, in *Barberini*, 187–88; Goar, *Euchologion*, 218; Eng. trans. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 138.

139. Bar. 164.11, in *Barberini*, 188; Goar, *Euchologion*, 218–19. The *maphorion* was a loose garment covering the head and shoulders worn by respectable Byzantine women. Byzantine icons usually show the Virgin Mary and female saints so attired (certain ascetic saints, such as Mary of Egypt, being obvious exceptions).

140. Bar. 164.13, in *Barberini*, 188; Goar, *Euchologion*, 219.

141. Literally, "when there is a *proskomide* service," that is, a service of preparation of the bread and wine for consecration during the Eucharist. Bar. 162.14, in *Barberini*, 184; Goar, *Euchologion*, 211.

142. Bar. 162.15, in *Barberini*, 185; Goar, *Euchologion*, 211.

143. The differences in the two sets of prayers are discussed below.

144. The text for the ordination of the male deacon says that the bishop "ἐπάρεται τὸ φελῶνιν" ("lifts up and sets on [the deacon] the *phelonin*"); Bar. 162.11, in *Barberini*, 184.

by the archbishop; (4) she was not given a *ripidion* (liturgical fan) to carry in procession or with which to fan the Holy Gifts; and (5) when the archbishop gave the deaconess the chalice after she had received Communion, she placed it back on the altar rather than taking it out of the sanctuary in order to distribute Communion to the laity.

As noted earlier, modern scholars have been far from unanimous in their analysis of this ordination rite, variously weighting the significance of the differences between the male and female deacons' ordinations. Some scholars find the similarities strong enough to assert that the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church constituted a major order.¹⁴⁵ Others have focused on the differences noted above and claim that it definitely was not,¹⁴⁶ while a few express ambivalence or simply avoid dealing with the issue, considering the female diaconate so unique and anomalous in the history and theology of clerical orders that they cannot place it definitively within either the major or minor category.¹⁴⁷

It is worth examining the differences that do occur between the rites for male and female deacons to ascertain if they are significant in terms of a theology of orders, or if they are relatively minor and may be accounted for by other reasons. The most significant difference is in the consecration prayers;¹⁴⁸ in fact, unlike the rest of the rite, there is almost no textual correspondence between the prayers for male and female deacons. Martimort argues that the difference in content between the two sets of prayers is substantial and indicates a considerable difference in function,¹⁴⁹ but his arguments are strained and

This garment is apparently what would become known as the *stikharion*, and should not be confused with the *phelonion*, or chasuble, worn by presbyters.

145. Among the first who argued for its placement among the major orders was Theodorou, "(Χειροτονία) ἡ (χειροθεσία)," 576–601. FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 78–110, while presenting the opposing view of John Karmiris, relies heavily on Theodorou's conclusions, and agrees with him. See also Vagaggini, "L'ordinazione," 177–85, and Taft, "Women at Church," 63–64, who supports this position since he clearly understands the ordination to be a "cheirotonia rite."
146. Opponents of the view that women deacons in the Byzantine Church were members of major orders include Vlassios Pheidias, "The Question of the Priesthood of Women," in *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women*, ed. Gennadios Limouris (Katerini, Greece: Tertios, 1992), 186–89, and Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 156.
147. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 88–89, may fall into this category since he makes no comment on the level of the order and, regarding the earlier *Apostolic Constitutions*, expresses his disquiet with anachronistic and oversimplistic categorizations of historical clerical orders (see n. 117, above). Nevertheless, in his review of the ordination rites of various orders, he treats the deaconess immediately after the deacon and before what he titles "minor orders"; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 83–103.
148. FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 82–101, offers a combination of theological with pastoral reflection on the two consecration prayers.
149. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 155–56.

unconvincing. For instance, he claims that the prayers for the male deacon refer specifically to his being a deacon by using the word "deacon" (*diakonos*), for example "the work of the deacon" (*to tou diakonou ergon*), but that, in the prayers for the female deacon, "reference was made only to διακονία, which was a very general and very imprecise term, translated as readily by 'service' as by 'diaconate.'" ¹⁵⁰ It is true that *diakonia* and *diakonos* have both generic and technical meanings. In this case, however, it strains common sense and violates the liturgical context of the prayers to understand the word *diakonia* as generic rather than technical when the prayers are for someone being ordained a *diakonos*. Certainly, Bradshaw feels that the term refers specifically to the diaconate in these prayers; hence, his translation of the key passages in the two consecration prayers: "the work of your diaconate" and "the grace of the diaconate."¹⁵¹

On the other hand, Martimort discounts two very important similarities in the consecration prayers. One is the *epiclesis*, which in the case of the female ordination rite, according to Martimort, indicated "that deaconesses were entering upon a state of life aimed at perfection,"¹⁵² as opposed to their receiving a specific grace conferred at ordination. His attempt to relativize its importance in the deaconess' ordination by reference to an *epiclesis* for minor orders in the *Apostolic Constitutions* is undercut, however, by his own admission that, "in the Byzantine rite, the Holy Spirit is invoked upon neither lectors nor subdeacons."¹⁵³ The second similarity is God's call to the ordinand, which Martimort implies was given to Phoebe but not to the candidate since the deaconess' willingness and desire is explicitly mentioned in her second prayer;¹⁵⁴ however, Martimort neglects to mention that the first prayer specifically asks God to "call her to the work of your diaconate," followed by the *epiclesis*, "and send down upon her the abundant gift of your Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁵

However, perhaps the most astounding example of Martimort's bias is his attempt to impose a difference where one does not exist, namely, at the beginning of the rite, where in the case of both male and female deacon, the rubrics state that the bishop intoned a prayer

150. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 156.

151. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 138.

152. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 155.

153. *Ibid.*

154. *Ibid.*

155. Bar. 163.3, in Barberini, 186; Goar, *Euchologion*, 218. Eng. trans. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 138.

beginning "*Hē theia charis*" ("The divine grace").¹⁵⁶ For neither sex is the full text of the prayer given in the *euchologia*,¹⁵⁷ but it is common to the ordination rite for all three major orders in the middle Byzantine period.¹⁵⁸ Martimort, however, seizes upon the opportunity presented by the omission of the full text of the prayer to extrapolate from a sixteenth-century *euchologion* that uses, for the consecration of abbots and stewards, a prayer beginning the same way but with different content since those are consecrations as opposed to ordinations. He justifies by tautological reasoning this backward projection from what is clearly not an ordination: "Surely this text could not have been the same one as was used at other ordinations, where the supposition always existed that the candidate already possessed the preceding degree of ministry."¹⁵⁹ However, it is unreasonable to infer a different prayer for the female deacon's ordination, particularly since the full text of the prayer is *not* given. That the *euchologia* cite only the incipit clearly indicates that it was the same prayer for both male and female deacon, as well as for presbyter and bishop.¹⁶⁰

While there is no theologically significant difference in the ordination prayers, Martimort is correct, however, in noting that there are differences in the liturgical functions of male and female deacons in the Byzantine Church. Not all differences in the rubrics, however, may be ascribed to differences in liturgical function, much less to differences in the level of ordination implied. For instance, with respect to the first and third differences noted above, Bradshaw has suggested that both the female ordinand's kneeling before the bishop and her receiving a kiss from him may have been considered inappropriate actions within Byzantine society; even a late Byzantine canonist, Matthew Blastares, saw nothing substantive in the female deacon's failure to kneel, instead assigning the rubrical difference to

156. Bar. 161.3 for the deacon, 163.2 for the deaconess, in *Barberini*, 181 and 185; Goar, *Euchologion*, 211 and 218. FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 80–82, gives the full text of the prayer from other sources and comments upon its significance.

157. In fact, Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 153, notes that no existing manuscript contains the complete text.

158. See, for example, Goar, *Euchologion*, 242 and 244, for the presbyter and bishop, respectively.

159. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 153.

160. In fact, L'Huillier, 244, argues the opposite from Martimort based on this very prayer. He notes that, although the ordination status of the deaconess in the early church may be ambiguous, the Byzantine female deacon clearly "acquired all the characteristics of accession to higher orders, as professor E. Theodorou has noted, since the formula 'the grace divine' is used." Taft, "Women at Church," 64, also finds the prayer incipit significant; see n. 126, above.

the deaconess' "weakness."¹⁶¹ As has already been made evident in other areas of deaconesses' historical liturgical participation, such as baptism and receiving the Eucharist at home, propriety has played an important role both in excluding women and including them in various ways. Thus, while it is conceivable that the rubrics for the deaconess to remain standing reflect her lack of public ministry at the altar, it more likely is simply a matter of propriety or "chivalry." In any case, Martimort's invocation of the symbolism of pseudo-Dionysius in stressing the importance of the act of kneeling appears misplaced.

Nevertheless, the remaining three differences are indeed connected to liturgical function. The female deacon in the Byzantine Church did not perform the public liturgical functions of the male deacon in the Divine Liturgy; thus, she was not given a *ripidion* in order to fan the Holy Gifts.¹⁶² Similarly, while the female deacon delivered the Eucharist to housebound women, she did not distribute it during the Divine Liturgy; therefore, when the bishop gave her the chalice after administering Communion to her, she simply returned it to the altar.¹⁶³

The final difference—that the female deacon does not wear a liturgical tunic and that she is vested with the *orarion*¹⁶⁴ in a different manner from the male deacon—similarly reflects a difference in liturgical function, but does not indicate a difference in the clerical orders'

161. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 88. Similar concerns are apparent in the requirement that even the female deacon wear the *maphorion*, which was considered proper woman's attire among the Byzantines and which reflected the Apostle Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 11 that women prophesy with their heads covered. As for Matthew Blastares' allusion to the deaconess' "weakness," this may refer either to generic "feminine weakness" (see n. 102, above) or to the more advanced age of female deacons relative to male deacons at the time of ordination; Blastares, *Collectio alphabetica*, letter Γ, chap. 11, in PG 144:1176.

162. Cf. Bar. 161.11 and 164.11, in *Barberini*, 184 and 188; Goar, *Euchologion*, 209 and 218–19; cf. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 156.

163. Cf. Bar. 161.13 and 164.13, in *Barberini*, 184 and 188; Goar, *Euchologion*, 209 and 219; see Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 154. Since there was no liturgical reason for the bishop to give the chalice to the deaconess, FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 102, cites a Swedish scholar named Brodd who suggests that it may have been a relic of an earlier practice of deaconesses distributing the Eucharist at the liturgy. However, there is no contemporaneous evidence to support this hypothesis. It seems likelier that it was simply a desire to parallel the male and female deacons' ordination rites as closely as possible to each other, limiting differences to those necessitated either by propriety or by differing liturgical functions.

164. For a fuller discussion of the *orarion*, see S. Salaville and G. Nowack, *Le rôle du diacre dans la liturgie orientale: Étude d'histoire et de liturgie*, Archives de l'orient chrétien, vol. 3 (Paris; Athens: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1962); and, especially, G. A. Soteriou, "Τὸ ὄράριον τοῦ διακόνου ἐν τῇ Ἀνατολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήνῃσι Πανεπιστημίου*, 1:3 (1926): 405–90.

respective rank.¹⁶⁵ As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the female deacon did not perform the public liturgical functions of the male deacon; these included reading petitions as well as participating in liturgical processions and distributing the Eucharist during the Divine Liturgy. Therefore, as with presbyters or male deacons who were not among the clerical celebrants for a particular liturgy,¹⁶⁶ she wore no liturgical tunic; in the case of the deaconess, there was no need to vest her with the tunic at all since her duties would never require her to wear it.

As for the *orarion*, the deaconess essentially wore it in the same manner as the subdeacon (that is, with both ends brought to the front), while the male deacon's stole hung from one shoulder or, for an archdeacon, circled diagonally around the body from one shoulder, with the two ends crossing and hanging down, front and back, from the shoulder. This difference, too, had a functional basis, since the male deacon held up the front half of his *orarion* while reciting petitions;¹⁶⁷ the deaconess would not be reading petitions. Conversely, the male deacon did not always wear his stole over one shoulder. During the Lord's Prayer he rewrapped it around him so that he then was vested with it in the same manner as the subdeacon and deaconess.¹⁶⁸

Again, the reason for changing the manner in which the male deacon wore the *orarion* was liturgical function. While neither middle Byzantine liturgical commentaries nor the rubrics of the *euchologia* of that period make any mention of this, frescoes mimicking liturgical acts, such as the Communion of the Apostles, show that typically the hands were covered when handling liturgical vessels (see the figure on the left in Figure 1). Neither deacon nor deaconess wore the large, cape-like *phelonion*, which the presbyter used to cover his hands; rather, they would have used the two ends of the *orarion* for that purpose.¹⁶⁹ Thus, male and female deacon in fact *were* vested

165. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 154, suggests this by commenting on the extension of the *orarion* to the subdeacon, in contravention of canon 22 of the fourth-century council of Laodicea.

166. A presbyter not serving at the liturgy, or one officiating at a noneucharistic service such as those from the liturgy of the hours, would not be fully vested, but would wear only the *epitrachelion*, which was the particular stole symbolizing his priesthood.

167. Balsamon, in PG 137:1369; in Soteriou, "Τὸ ὀράριον," 457.

168. Peter D. Day, *The Liturgical Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical [A Michael Glazier Book], 1993), 213.

169. See Soteriou, "Τὸ ὀράριον," 433. In addition to the occasional evidence provided by such illuminated manuscripts as the tenth-century Athens gr. 211, fol. 110v, and the fourteenth-century Brit. Mus. Add. 39627, fol. 202r, numerous frescoes from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries of the Communion of the Apostles depict apostles approaching the chalice with their hands veiled, including St. Sophia in Ohrid (eleventh



FIG. 1. Fresco of the Communion of the Apostles, Hagia Sophia, Ochrid, 1037–56 AD. Courtesy Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag.

identically with the *orarion* at the time of Communion in order to hold the chalice during reception of the Eucharist.

It deserves mention in this context that, in contrast to the extensive literary evidence of the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church, there is a complete lack of visual evidence. No vested deaconess saints appear in Byzantine-era frescoes, although their male counterparts, such as Stephen and Laurence, are typically shown vested. For example, the north (funerary) chapel of a monastic church in Cappadocia known as Ayvali Kilise preserves a rare tenth-century fresco of St. Olympias, friend and patron of St. John Chrysostom.¹⁷⁰ The fresco is

century); and monastic churches in Studenica (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), and Gracanica and Čučer (fourteenth century). Photos of many of these frescoes (including Figure 1 above) appear in Richard Hamann-Mac Lean and Horst Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, Osteuropastudien der Hochschulen des Landes Hessen, Reihe 2, Band 3 (Giessen: W. Schmitz, 1963).

170. Nicole Thierry and Michel Thierry, "Ayvali Kilise ou Pigeonnier de Gülli Dere: Église inédite de Cappadoce," *Cahiers archéologiques* 15 (1965): 126–27.

rather badly deteriorated; nevertheless, it appears that she is dressed identically to the other holy women, not vested as a deaconess.

It is difficult to form any conclusions from her secular attire, however. On the one hand, certainly she would have been known to be a deaconess since that information was contained in the *menaion* and *synaxarion*¹⁷¹ accounts of her life (she must have been familiar to the monks for them to have commemorated her on the wall of the church, although she might have been included because a relative of the founder or other monk shared the same name). On the other hand, the fresco is dated to sometime between 913 and 920,¹⁷² by which time the lack of provincial evidence shows the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church to be in decline, at least outside of Constantinople and Jerusalem, and possibly Byzantine Italy. It is quite likely that monks in tenth-century Cappadocia, in central Asia Minor, would never actually have seen an ordained deaconess. Therefore, the iconographer (who may even have been a member of the community, although the quality of the work is far from primitive¹⁷³) would not have known how to depict one.

In addition, the rite of ordination examined above shows that the female deacon did not wear a liturgical tunic. It also indicates that the bishop placed the *orarion* under the *maphorion* which covered the deaconess' head and shoulders, making the *orarion* rather difficult to see in an icon, particularly given the pattern of fabric folds common in Byzantine iconography. Therefore, the lack of visual evidence of vested deaconesses, particularly since relatively little pre-iconoclastic religious art remains extant, is probably not significant.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the ordination rite for the female deacon, and the one that most obviously demonstrates that the female diaconate was considered a major order, is that the deaconess received the Eucharist at the altar with the rest of the higher clergy.¹⁷⁴ Although the *euchologia* do not give the order of reception of Communion in the rubrics for the normal celebration of the Divine

171. The *menaion* (from the Greek word for "month"—there were twelve *menaia*) contained the special hymns and readings, including short *vitae* of the relevant saints, associated with the calendar feasts. The *synaxarion* provided only the saints' lives, but at greater length.

172. Thierry and Thierry, "Ayvalie Kilise," 101.

173. Thierry and Thierry, "Ayvalie Kilise," 99.

174. This differs from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII, 13, 14, in SC 336:208–10, whose rubrics place the deaconess at the head of the ordained and consecrated women who receive the Eucharist, after all the ordained and consecrated men, including lower orders and monks. This may simply reflect the segregation of the sexes, however, since all the ordained and consecrated men are listed first (in descending order), followed by the ordained and consecrated women, then by the children and the rest of the laity.

Liturgy,¹⁷⁵ the order followed at ordination would have been followed more generally. It is possible, of course, that female deacons, not having the liturgical altar duties of their male counterparts, remained outside the altar area and communed with the laity and noncelebrating clergy. On the other hand, it seems incongruous to postulate that the female deacon in the Byzantine Church was vested with the *orarion* and received Communion at the altar at her ordination, but then functioned liturgically completely as a layperson thereafter. Rather, it is reasonable to assume that female deacons—at least those “on duty” for a particular liturgy—were vested with the *orarion* and thus received Communion at the altar as the last of the major orders of clergy to do so. At some later point, when deaconesses were no longer ordained, they would have remained outside the altar and received Communion with the rest of the laity.

V. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FEMALE DIACONATE

The question of how long female deacons did survive as an ordained order is difficult to answer. Since *euchologia* often retained archaic and obsolete practices, the mere appearance of an ordination rite for female deacons, as discussed previously, does not necessarily confirm the existence of ordained female deacons at the time the liturgical manual was written. On the other hand, the *euchologia* did change over time,¹⁷⁶ so defunct rituals that new manuscripts continued to include were probably not so far removed from the time of the manuscript's creation as to be beyond some oral tradition or collective memory, particularly when that ritual was as unique as the ordination, at the altar, of a female deacon.

Moreover, the fact that one of the liturgical functions of Byzantine deaconesses in the late middle period was chanting indicates the likelihood of their ordained status continuing well into that period, since chanting duties were normally performed by ordained clergy, particularly in the large cathedrals. Male chanters were ordained to the minor order of reader; the only order of female chanters (apart from nuns) for which we have information are in fact deaconesses. Of

175. As mentioned earlier, the rubrics assume only a presbyter and deacon.

176. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 173, provides two examples of *euchologia* from the late and post-Byzantine period that do not contain the ordination rite for female deacons, observing that “not all of the copyists, of course, were slaves to routine to the same degree.” The *Goar euchologion* includes variations in ordination and other rites based on several manuscripts. Moreover, there are some striking differences between the eighth-century Barberini 336 codex and the tenth-century Grottaferrata manuscript, for example, in the service of the forty-day blessing after the birth of a child. See nn. 188 and 189, below.

course, the documentary evidence demonstrates that Byzantine deaconesses continued liturgical chanting—for a time, at least—even after they ceased to be ordained, but the Patriarch Athanasius' *entolima* in the early fourteenth century demonstrates the suspicion and discomfort with which the church viewed an order that was no longer actually an ordained order. In all probability, the Constantinopolitan patriarch's proscription against the "custom" of deaconesses evidences the final loss of any widespread institutional memory of the *ordained* order of female deacons.¹⁷⁷

Thus, female deacons in the Byzantine Church appear to have reached their zenith in the early Byzantine period, where there is a plethora of archaeological, canonical, legislative, liturgical, and hagiographic evidence not only for Constantinople but for Asia Minor as well. By contrast, in the middle Byzantine period, particularly following iconoclasm, the evidence becomes increasingly scanty and simultaneously more ambiguous. Especially outside the capital city of Constantinople and holy city of Jerusalem, there is almost no indication of a female diaconate beyond a seal and a few passing references emanating from Byzantine Italy in the liminal seventh and eighth centuries. Did the social, political, and military upheavals of the iconoclastic period have a negative effect on the female diaconate? There is no specific evidence to support such a hypothesis, but the apparent decline of the order at this time, especially in the provinces, probably is not sheer coincidence. Female monasticism, like its male counterpart, played an important role in the resistance to imperial iconoclastic policy;¹⁷⁸ the female diaconate, by this time largely tied to female monasticism, may have suffered as a consequence. Moreover, the active female diaconate may have been just another of the many practices and institutions of late antiquity and the early Byzantine period that fell into oblivion during this critical period as provincial cities contracted and refashioned themselves and their civic and

177. Further evidence of the loss of institutional memory of ordained deaconesses may be the lack of any mention of them in Symeon of Thessaloniki's *De sacris ordinationibus*, in PG 155:361–470; deacons are treated in cols. 361–84, along in part with other major orders. Symeon was born in Constantinople in the latter half of the fourteenth century and became archbishop of Thessaloniki, the second most important city in the Byzantine Empire, in the early fifteenth century. His massive works describe in detail the liturgical practices of Thessaloniki in his time, yet in this treatise on clerical ordinations he never mentions female deacons. See Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 174.

178. For example, popular tradition held that the first iconophile martyr was a nun. For women's roles during iconoclasm, consult Alice-Mary Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998).

religious way of life.¹⁷⁹ However, given the continuation of male clerical orders virtually unchanged, the discontinuities of the iconoclastic period probably did not in themselves play a major role in the decline of the female diaconate.

By at least the ninth or tenth century, it appears that only nuns were ordained as female deacons. While the evidence for female diaconal ordination itself is less conclusive for the ninth through early twelfth centuries than for earlier eras, there is enough to hypothesize that the female diaconate probably continued to exist as an ordained order in Constantinople and Jerusalem for most if not all of this period. Judging by John Zonaras' implication that the ordained order still existed in his time (early to mid-twelfth century),¹⁸⁰ it may be further hypothesized that the ordination of female deacons in the Byzantine Church ceased at about this time since, according to Theodore Balsamon's statement in the late twelfth century, "[t]oday deaconesses are no longer ordained although certain members of ascetical religious communities are erroneously styled deaconesses."¹⁸¹ At the same time, Balsamon noted that the (no longer ordained) order continued to exist as a special group of nuns, and Anthony of Novgorod described them as participating in the chanting of the matins service.

No one knows exactly when or why the female diaconate disappeared from the life of the Byzantine Church in the late middle Byzantine period since there are no extant sources calling for its abolition (with the exception of Patriarch Athanasius' *entagma*, which however was promulgated after the order ceased to be an ordained one). Most scholars have chosen not to hypothesize on it, although a few theories have been advanced.¹⁸² In the absence of any documentary

179. See, for example, Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), esp. 60–87. The Eastern provinces in particular were seriously affected by, first, Arab incursions beginning in the seventh century and, later, repeated Turkish onslaughts, particularly in Asia Minor, from the eleventh century on.

180. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 171, n. 36, remarks that both John Zonaras and Alexius Aristenes (mid-twelfth century) "commented on this canon as if it were still in force," yet discounts the value of these witnesses since, he claims, "that was the typical proceeding of that age." Nevertheless, the fact that Balsamon, near the end of the same century, did not attempt to pretend that an extinct order still existed seems to challenge Martimort's denial. Zonaras and Aristenes are probably as reliable about the practice of their day as are Balsamon and, later, Blastares, for theirs. It is also possible that female deacons were no longer being ordained by the mid-twelfth century, but that Zonaras and Aristenes knew of women who had been ordained slightly earlier.

181. See n. 53, above.

182. For example, Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 171–74, recounts the evidence from Balsamon of the disappearance of the female diaconate but suggests no rationale for it. By contrast, FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 134–48, suggests several possible reasons, but most do not answer the question of why the female diaconate declined in the Byzantine Church at the end of the middle Byzantine period. For example, changing liturgical practices

evidence pointing to other causes, the most likely answer—both for the decline beginning in the iconoclastic period and the eventual vanishing of the ordained order in the twelfth century—is the introduction into the Byzantine Church beginning in the late seventh century of severe liturgical restrictions on menstruating women.

The extant evidence for the early church shows a dichotomy between Alexandria and Antioch in attitudes toward menstruation and other bodily functions associated by Levitical law with ritual impurity.¹⁸³ The restrictions on menstruants that surfaced first within Christianity in the canonical letters of Dionysius of Alexandria¹⁸⁴ in the mid-third century became canon law for the Byzantine Church in 692 through the Council in Trullo,¹⁸⁵ which adopted wholesale the canonical writings of a dozen bishops, including Dionysius and his later successor, Timothy, who similarly restricted menstruous women from receiving the Eucharist or even entering the church.¹⁸⁶

(including the universality of infant baptism) and reactions to gnosticism might have been relevant in late antiquity and the early Byzantine period, but not in the twelfth century; conversely, the effect of the Church's captivity under Islam might have influenced provincial practices, but would not have been a factor in Constantinople since it was not conquered by the Ottoman Turks until at least three centuries after the disappearance of the deaconess. The presumed negative influence of Islam on women's liturgical orders is also contraindicated by Jerusalem's retention of the female diaconate as well as its unique office of *myrophoroi*. As for the prohibitions of various Western Church councils, those were no more likely to be followed by the Byzantine Church than were Western prohibitions against married clergy. FitzGerald (143–45) does raise the issue of menstruation in the context of the writings of Theodore Balsamon and Matthew Blastares, but draws no specific conclusions; "women's sexuality" is simply one possibility among several.

183. See n. 108, above. It should be noted, however, that even in Syria, where women per se were not excluded from the altar, they were at times restricted from both it and the Eucharist when menstruous. See Branham, "Bloody Women and Bloody Spaces," 20. Branham's thesis is that restrictions against menstruous women in Jewish temple worship and Christian eucharistic worship in late antiquity and the early medieval period were based on the notion of eliminating competing bloods, menstrual and sacred (that is, the Eucharist). Her thesis might provide at least a partial explanation for the ease with which canonists such as Balsamon and Blastares rationalized away for ejaculant men the Levitical notions of ritual impurity that they so eagerly applied to menstruating and postpartum women. See Patrick Viscuso, "Purity and Sexual Defilement in Late Byzantine Theology," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 57 (1991): 400–402.
184. Can. 2, in PG 10:1281A; Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 1:544; G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κανόνων* (Athens: G. Chartophylax, 1854), 4:7–9, including the commentaries of Zonaras and Balsamon. See Branham, "Bloody Women and Bloody Spaces," 19–20; Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred," 288–89; Frank, "Menstruation and Motherhood," 198–201.
185. Can. 2, in Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 2:21–23.
186. Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici*, 1:631. This is Question 7 in a series of 18 questions and answers, referred to as "the 18 canons of Timothy" or the "Canonical Replies." Frank, "Menstruation and Motherhood," 200, notes that, in Question 6 (requiring a woman to defer baptism until after her menstrual cycle) as well as in Question 7, Timothy adds that the menstruant should wait "until she has been purified of it" (ὥς οὐ καθαρῶς—

It probably took some time for the private canons given ecumenical authority by the Council in Trullo to gain such widespread acceptance as to alter liturgical practice and be taken for granted by the twelfth- and fourteenth-century canonists Theodore Balsamon and Matthew Blastares, respectively.¹⁸⁷ It is in this same period—between the eighth and eleventh centuries—that fragmentary evidence indicates the rise of ritual impurity notions associated with childbirth, the other “women-and-blood” nexus. The eighth-century Barberini codex gives only a single prayer for a newborn child’s presentation at church forty days after birth, with no rubrics attached and no mention of the mother.¹⁸⁸ By contrast, in the eleventh-century Grottaferrata manuscript, there is a full forty-day rite commemorating not only the entrance of the child into the church but also the mother’s return to it; the service is named for the mother¹⁸⁹ and includes two prayers for her as well as two prayers for the child. In addition to this liturgical evidence, there is the startling canonical opinion of the early-ninth-century Constantinopolitan patriarch Nikephoros, who advised that an infant who received emergency baptism before the forty-day rite could not be cared for, or even approached, by its mother until the mother had been “purified.”¹⁹⁰

note that Taft, “Women at Church,” 75, reads ἕως ἂν καθαρῶσθῃ, although this does not substantively change the meaning of the text). Taft wonders whether “there was a specific Christian ritual of purification for women, or only that there was a period of time that had to elapse in order to effect purification?” Since the church would not have required the sacrifice of pigeons as prescribed in the Levitical law, it is not unreasonable to assume that the purification was a bath of some sort, similar to that which the fifth-century *Testamentum Domini* (I, 42) required of Widows following their menstrual period before they returned to the altar. I. Rahmani, *Testamentum Domini*, 100; Eng. trans. Grant S. Sperry-White, “Daily Prayer in Its Ascetic Context in the Syriac and Ethiopic *Testamentum Domini*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), 59. However, this does not mean that such bathing was a church ritual. The term could just as easily refer either to some homespun ritual or even to a woman’s visiting the public baths at the end of her menstrual cycle, in which case καθαρῶσθῃ might more accurately be translated simply as “made clean” than “purified,” which has ritual connotations. Regarding this provision in the *Testamentum Domini*, also see Taft, “Women at Church,” 75.

187. See Branham, “Bloody Women and Bloody Spaces,” 20–21. Moreover, given Balsamon’s complaint, in PG 138:465C, that women often ignored the full proscription by participating in the liturgy from the narthex, one wonders just how widespread—or at least heartfelt—the acceptance of restrictions on menstruants was even in the twelfth century. See Taft, “Women at Church,” 50.

188. Bar. 336, 113, in *Barberini*, 97. See Miguel Arranz, “Les sacrements de l’ancien Eucologe constantinopolitain (3),” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 49 (1983): 292–93.

189. “Εὐχαὶ εἰς γυναῖκα λεχῶ, μετὰ μ’ ἡμέρας.” Goar, *Euchologion*, 267–71.

190. Pitra, *luris ecclesiastici*, 2:335. José Grosdidier de Matons, “La femme dans l’empire byzantin,” in *Histoire mondiale de la femme*, ed. Pierre Grimal (Paris: Nouvelle librairie de France, 1967), 36, appears to be aware of this canon of Nikephoros when he comments on the differing effects of the mother’s ritual uncleanness on the newborn,

Thus, by the eleventh century, if not earlier, the Byzantine Church had developed a theology of women's ritual impurity associated with menstruation and childbirth, and even expressed this liturgically through the expansion of the forty-day blessing service previously offered exclusively for the newborn child. So, it is not surprising that Balsamon erroneously argued, against the evidence to the contrary (of which he was aware), that women deacons in earlier times could not have attended at the altar because "the impurity of their menstrual periods dictated their separation from the divine and holy sanctuary,"¹⁹¹ his assumption of unchanging ecclesiastical tradition leading him to extrapolate anachronistically back to earlier church history the theology and practice of the late-twelfth-century Byzantine Church.

However, a fourteenth-century Byzantine canonist, Matthew Blastares, did not go so far as to argue that women had never been permitted *per se* into the altar area. Indeed, Blastares was obviously familiar with much of the late antique and early to middle Byzantine literature regarding the female diaconate, including the ordination rite.¹⁹² The canonist even stated that some people believed that female deacons "were permitted to approach the altar [θυσιαστήριον] and to share a role with male deacons pretty much on an equal basis with them."¹⁹³ While admitting that little was now known of the ministry of women deacons, Blastares nevertheless found the latter proposition improbable, arguing that women could not have served liturgically at the altar since they were not permitted to teach publicly; rather, they were appointed as deacons in order to assist at baptism. As for women at the altar, Blastares observed that women in earlier times had been permitted to approach the altar, giving as an example Gorgonia, the sister of Gregory of Nazianzus.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, Matthew Blastares stands out as the rare Byzantine who not only acknowledged that ordained female deacons had at one time existed but who, at least through the opinion of "others," recognized that they may have disappeared because of a change in the church's theology and practice: "Later, however, the Fathers forbade them to approach the altar and carry out any service [ύπηρεσίας] there because of their menstrual periods."¹⁹⁵

depending on the infant's baptismal status. This would explain why infants normally were not baptized before forty days.

191. Theodore Balsamon, *Responsa* 35, in PG 138:988; Eng. trans. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 172.

192. Blastares, *Collectio alphabetica*, letter Γ, chap. 11, in PG 144:1176, summarizes the ordination rite as it appears in the Barberini and Grottaferrata *euchologia*.

193. *Ibid.*, col. 1173; Eng. trans. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 173.

194. *Ibid.*

195. *Ibid.*; Eng. trans. Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 173.

VI. CONCLUSION

As for the modern scholarly debate over whether the female deacon was considered "ordained" and whether that ordination was considered a major order, the naysayers predicate their opposition on two erroneous postulates. The first is the unsubstantiated presupposition—in truth, a tautological argument—that women were always excluded from major orders in the history of the church, and that to admit that they had been ordained to one major order then would open the door for their admission to the other two.¹⁹⁶ The second is the assumption that, if the female diaconate was not identical to the male diaconate in liturgical function, then it was not a true diaconal office.¹⁹⁷

However, both presuppositions fail on their merits. With respect to the first one, in reality all three major orders are distinct and unique, but the diaconate is particularly distinct vis-à-vis both the presbytery and the episcopacy. As noted earlier in this article, even male deacons were not permitted to celebrate any of the sacraments, including baptism. Their liturgical function was to assist the presbyter or bishop, and the deacon was even buried as a layperson, there being no special funeral rite for him as there was for presbyters and bishops.¹⁹⁸ That women were ordained to the diaconate in the Byzantine Church does not thereby lead to the conclusion that they could (at least in theory) also have been ordained to the presbytery and episcopacy. There is no evidence to support such a conclusion, and modern concerns about whether or not women should be ordained to these orders should not influence current scholarly interpretations of the historical record.¹⁹⁹

As for the second presupposition, limiting the choices for understanding the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church to "equal to the male diaconate" or "not a true diaconate" creates a false and overly simplistic dichotomy.²⁰⁰ The female diaconate obviously was not the exact equivalent to the male diaconate since the deaconess did not serve the public liturgical role that the male deacon did—she

196. For example, Pheidias, "The Question of the Priesthood of Women," 181–89.

197. This second argument, below the surface, appears to be based on the first one; that is, it has more to do with modern ecclesiastical debates over the role of women in the church than with a dispassionate scholarly view of the historical record. See Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 148–56, 243–50.

198. See n. 84, above.

199. L'Huillier, *Church of the Ancient Councils*, 316, n. 392, echoes this sentiment.

200. L'Huillier, *Church of the Ancient Councils*, 245, raises a similar caution in his discussion of the significance of canon 15 of Chalcedon with respect to the status of the female diaconate.

neither chanted the diaconal petitions, nor processed at the Great Entrance (an assumption based on her not receiving the *ripidion* during her ordination), nor distributed the Eucharist to the laity during the liturgy. This should not be surprising given the Byzantines' ideology of the private role of women versus the public role of men.²⁰¹ This same distinction was clear in the respective functions of male and female deacons in the early church. In other words, the female deacon's liturgical ministry mirrored the public space/private space segregation of roles and functions endemic in both late antique and Byzantine cultures.

However, although the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church was not simply the mirror image of the male diaconate, it was considered equivalent to the male diaconate in terms of clerical ranking. Certainly, that is how the Byzantines treated it, as evidenced from the sixth through the twelfth centuries in imperial legislation, church orders, ordination rites, and even the order in which the ordination rites were organized in the *euchologia*. The ordination rite itself, including vesting with the diaconal *orarion* and reception of Communion at the altar with the deacons, presbyters, and bishop, further underscores the Byzantines' assumption that the deaconess was part of the higher clergy of the church. It was related to the male diaconate in a manner analogous, perhaps, to the relationship between the orders of the episcopacy and the presbytery.²⁰² Just as the bishop's role more actively involved him in the larger church than did the presbyter's, so the male deacon's role more actively involved him, particularly liturgically, in the larger parish community than did the deaconess'. Thus, the Byzantine female diaconate was a liminal and unique clerical office that operated as a distinct order, at the diaconal level, focused on pastoral and liturgical ministry to women and recognized as a major clerical order in both the civil and ecclesiastical literature of the Byzantine period.

201. Ideology and actual practice often differed, of course. See Judith Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach," 167–89, in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1983; rev. ed. 1993), esp. 168–70; Alice-Mary Talbot, "Women," 117–43, in *The Byzantines*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo, trans. Thomas Dunlap, Teresa Lavender Fagan, and Charles Lambert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), esp. 129–40.
202. See n. 81, above.



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An Introduction to Byzantine Monasticism*

ALICE-MARY TALBOT

The institution of monasticism was one of the most important characteristics of Byzantine society, and touched the life of virtually every imperial subject in many ways. First of all, a substantial number of Byzantine men and women took monastic vows: some in their youth, who pledged themselves to a lifetime of dedication to Christ; some in middle age, when their children were grown; many more at the end of their lives. Countless Byzantines, when they realized they were on their deathbed, took the monastic habit for their final hours or days, in the belief that, by dying in the holier monastic state, they were more likely to achieve salvation in the world to come.

*There is as yet no definitive work on Byzantine monasticism. The following are recommended as an introduction; they will guide the interested reader to further bibliography. C. Mango, *Byzantium: the Empire of New Rome* (New York 1980), ch. 5 on Monasticism; R. Janin, "Le monachisme byzantin au moyen âge. Commende et typika (X^e-XIV^e siècle)," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 22 (1964), 15-44; P. Charanis, "The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971), 61-84; N. M. Vapori, ed., *Byzantine Saints and Monasteries* (Brookline, Mass. 1985), a series of articles reprinted from *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 30 (1985); a group of essays on female monasticism in *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985).

Among the most important primary sources for monasticism are the documents preserved in the archives of Mt. Athos (currently being published in the series, *Archives de l'Athos*, ed., P. Lemerle), and the *typika* or foundation charters of monasteries. New critical editions of five eleventh and twelfth-century *typika* were recently published with French translation by the late Paul Gautier in *Revue des Études Byzantines* 32 (1974), 39 (1981), 40 (1982), 42 (1984) and 43 (1985). A project currently in progress, the Dumbarton Oaks/N.E.H. Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents Project, is preparing annotated translations of all 52 surviving Byzantine monastic *typika*. Lives of Byzantine saints, who were usually monks or nuns, also throw much light on Byzantine monasticism; available in English are Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (Ann Arbor, Mich. 1957) and Elizabeth Dawes and Norman Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford 1948).

The monastery was often the spiritual center of a rural village or urban quarter; local inhabitants might attend services at the monastic church, seek out monks for spiritual advice, or ask for help in time of need. If a Byzantine fell ill, he or she might find medical care in a hospital attached to the monastic complex, or alternatively seek healing at the tomb of a saint whose relics were preserved in the church. A traveler who hesitated to stop for the night at an inn (which was usually a euphemism for a brothel) might find accommodation at a hostel run by monks. An elderly widow without children to look after her could find spiritual companionship and nursing care in a convent; the nuns would also see to her proper burial and arrange commemorative services after her death, all in exchange for a handsome donation to the nunnery. The poor could come to the monastery gate and receive loaves of bread, wine, and the leftovers from the refectory. A wealthy noble, who wanted to present a deluxe illuminated Gospelbook to a church, could commission the copying and illustration of such a manuscript in a monastic scriptorium, or workshop for the production of manuscripts. A peasant who owned a small plot of land might be pressured into selling his vineyard or olive grove to the local monastery, which wished to increase its holdings; he might on the other hand give the land to the monastery as a pious act, in exchange for commemorative requiem masses in perpetuity. Emperors as well as peasants took personal interest in monasteries; they might found new ones, or present existing ones with landed estates, or declare their immunity from taxation. Emperors sought out monks as advisers on matters of state as well as religious policy. And not a few Byzantine emperors ended their lives in monasteries, either unwillingly when they were deposed from the throne by a usurper and forced into the tonsure, or of their own accord as an act of personal faith when their end drew near. Finally, monasteries served as the bulwark of Byzantine Orthodox Christianity: in the eighth and ninth centuries monks were among the most ardent supporters of image veneration and adversaries of iconoclasm: in the thirteenth century monks were persecuted for opposing Michael VIII's policy of Union with the Roman Church at the Council of Lyons (1274). In the following century the monasteries and hermitages of Mt. Athos nurtured the burgeoning mystical movement called hesychasm, which was to give new vitality to the Orthodox religious tradition.

I. The Origins of Monasticism

Let us turn to the early centuries of the empire to seek out the origins of this institution which affected every level of Byzantine society throughout its long history. The beginnings of monasticism are closely connected with the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire; the first monks appeared during the final period of persecution of Christians in the late third century, just before the conversion of the emperor Constantine in the following century.

The word “monasticism” is derived from the Greek verb μονάζω (“to live alone”), and indeed the first monks were hermits. In order to escape persecution pious Christians would retire into the desert, alone, where they could lead lives of asceticism and prayer without harassment. Tradition holds that a certain Paul (called the “First Hermit,” to distinguish him from the apostle) was the first Christian to adopt this rigorous life style. Fleeing persecution, perhaps that of the Emperor Decius (249–51), he withdrew to some mountains in the Egyptian desert to live in a cave. Nearby grew a palm tree, and a stream of water flowed by. He wove himself a garment of palm leaves, and every day a crow brought him half a loaf of bread. Thus he had all the necessities of life, and lived there peacefully for 60 years until his death.

His younger contemporary, St. Antony, is much better known, primarily because of the vivid Life which the Church Father Athanasius of Alexandria wrote about him in the fourth century. This became the pattern for all future biographies of saints, and was widely read in the medieval world, both east and west. Paul had lived completely alone, but disciples flocked to St. Antony, and so communities of monks developed. The monks remained in their separate cells during the week, praying and weaving rush mats, but met on weekends for church services. This kind of monastic community was called a *lavra*. St. Antony is significant in that he demonstrated a new way of achieving sanctity, without martyrdom, but through extreme mortification of the body.

He kept vigil to such an extent that he often continued the whole night without sleep, and this not once but often, to the marvel of others. He ate once a day, after sunset; sometimes once in two days, and often even in four. His food was bread and salt; his drink, water only; of flesh and wine it is superfluous even to speak, since no such thing was found with the other earnest men. A rush mat served him to sleep upon, but for the most part he lay upon the bare ground.¹

In the early fourth century people flocked to the desert to follow Antony's example. One might think that the establishment of Christianity would have contributed to the decline of monasticism, since in the beginning so many monks had fled to the desert to avoid persecution. But curiously enough, once Christianity was tolerated, the number of monks increased even more. Many Christians felt that now their faith was not being sufficiently tested, so they retired to the desert to create their own rigorous discipline. And not just men, but women, too, became hermits; a number of these hermitesses, however, disguised themselves as men, to

¹ Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, tr. H. Ellershaw and A. Robertson, in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters* [= *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 4] (New York 1892), pp. 197–98.

protect themselves against rape, or as a denial of their own sexuality.² In the biography of St. Antony, Satan is heard to complain: "I am become weak. . . . I no longer have a place, a weapon, a city. The Christians are spread everywhere, and at length even the desert is filled with monks."³

Problems began to arise, however, when Christians became monks for non-spiritual reasons, for example to escape taxes and military service. And I quote again from the Life of St. Antony:

So their cells were in the mountains like tabernacles, filled with holy bands of men who sang psalms, loved reading, fasted, prayed, rejoiced in the hope of things to come. . . . And truly it was possible, as it were, to behold a land set by itself, filled with piety and justice. For then there was neither the evil-doer nor the injured, nor *the reproaches of the tax-gatherer*: but instead a multitude of ascetics, and the one purpose of them all was to aim at virtue . . . many soldiers and men who had great possessions laid aside the burdens of life, and became monks for the rest of their days.⁴

In fact so many young men retired to the desert that later in the fourth century an emperor ordered the removal of those monks who fled to monasteries in order to evade public duties.

In addition to the hermits and monks who lived in *lavras*, another form of monasticism developed in Egypt around 300. This was the cenobitic monastery, derived from the Greek words κοινὸς βίος, or "common life." Pachomius was the founder of this highly organized form of monasticism in Upper Egypt, just north of Thebes and Luxor. In cenobitic monasteries, a third virtue, that of obedience, was added to the virtues of poverty and chastity practised by hermits. For the monastery was headed by an abbot to whom the monks owed obedience. Hermit monks decided on their own life style, and, as it were, their personal spiritual program for attaining salvation. At cenobitic monasteries regular religious services were held, and all monks were required to attend. Each monk was also expected to perform some manual labor, working in the fields or weaving, for example. The Pachomian monasteries were enormous, often numbering hundreds of monks or even thousands.

If one reads stories of these early "desert fathers," certain themes keep cropping up in one edifying tale after another. One is the monks' abhorrence of the female sex; they went to great lengths to avoid any contact with women. One monk, for example, found himself in a situation where he was forced to carry his mother across a river. He covered his hands with his garment when carrying her, so as not to touch her. When his mother asked him why he covered his hands, he replied: "Because the body of a

²E. Patlagean, "L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance," *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3, 17 (1976), 597-623.

³*Life of Antony*, p. 207.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 208, 219.

woman is fire. And even from my touching thee came the memory of other women into my soul.”⁵

Connected with this sexual obsession was abhorrence of one's own body. The Egyptian monks never washed or changed their clothes; the Pachomian rule provided for a bath only if a monk was sick. We read of St. Antony that

he had a garment of hair on the inside, while the outside was skin, which he kept until his end. And he never bathed his body with water to free himself from filth, nor did he ever wash his feet, nor even endure so much as to put them into water, unless compelled by necessity. Nor did anyone ever see him unclothed, nor his body naked at all, except after his death, when he was buried.⁶

The monks' obsession with abstinence from sex was almost equalled by their obsessive abstinence from food; the monks competed with each other to see who could eat the least. Makarios the Great, for example, once observed the Lenten fast by eating only once a week, a few cabbage leaves on Sunday!

II. St. Basil of Caesarea

The Pachomian type of monastery was the basis of all later monasteries that evolved in both the western and eastern Mediterranean; specifically it gave rise to the Basilian monastery of eastern orthodoxy, and to the Benedictine monastery in the west. “Basilian” monasticism takes its name from one of the Fathers of the Eastern Church, St. Basil of Caesarea, who played an important role in synthesizing the classical tradition with Christian faith. This fusion was the basis of most later Byzantine theology.

In the mid-fourth century Basil set out to formulate a rule for his monastery in Cappadocia (in central Anatolia). He was dissatisfied with the forms of monasticism that had developed in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, and sought to introduce a modified form of Pachomian monasticism into Asia Minor. He strongly endorsed the cenobitic monastery, and did not approve at all of the solitary life. He thought it was difficult and even dangerous for a monk to live alone, unless he had tremendous self-control. Also it was hard for a hermit to be self-sufficient; he had to depend on the charity of visitors for his daily needs. Basil argued that the majority of monks cannot muster sufficient discipline to become hermits, and need a communal form of monasticism. Each member of the community would be expected to contribute to providing for the physical necessities of the monastery, and the monks would encourage and criticize each other in their spiritual development.

⁵ Waddell, *Desert Fathers*, p. 74.

⁶ *Life of Antony*, p. 209.

Basil's system was based on the Pachomian rule, but differed from it in several ways.

1. He reduced the size of monasteries, since he felt the huge aggregates of monks in Egypt were too large.

2. Obedience to the abbot was considered the primary virtue.

3. He forbade extraordinary feats of asceticism and mortification; if a monk wanted to make a special fast, he had to ask the abbot's permission.

4. Another important difference from the rule of Pachomius was that Basil established monasteries in towns instead of in deserts, so that monks would not be isolated from their fellow men, but could practise charity towards them. Also by their conduct, monks were to provide their secular brethren with a model of the true Christian life.⁷

Here we see the beginnings of a characteristic of medieval monasteries, which provided service to the lay community, as well as supporting the monk's individual search for personal salvation. What impresses one most, however, in reading the *Long Rules* of Basil is the tone of moderation and practicality, compared with the fanaticism of the monks of Egypt, or the stylite saints of Syria who lived on top of columns. One can clearly detect here the influence of Greek rationalism, and the ancient Greek adage, "nothing in excess."

III. Byzantine Monasticism in its Fully Developed Form

One of the most important differences that emerged between eastern and western monasticism in the Middle Ages was that Byzantine monks were not organized into separate orders like their Benedictine, Franciscan or Dominican counterparts in the west. In a sense all Byzantine monasteries belonged to one order, and followed the Rule of St. Basil; at the same time each monastery was organized on an individual basis, and provided with rules by its founder. About fifty of these foundation documents, called *typika*, survive, an invaluable source of information about ideals of monasticism and the realities of daily life in Byzantine monasteries from the ninth to the fifteenth century.

Normally these documents include a preamble which explains the founder's motivation for establishing a new monastery, followed by detailed guidelines for the monks or nuns. Topics covered include the election of the superior, the length of the novitiate, rules of enclosure, behavior in the refectory, dietary rules for feasts and fasts, the monastic habit, and discipline of disobedient monks or nuns. All the *typika* place strong

⁷ An English translation of the *Long Rules* can be found in *Saint Basil. Ascetical Works*, tr. by Monica Wagner (New York 1950), pp. 223–337.

emphasis on strict adherence to the cenobitic form of monasticism, especially with regard to eating. Monks and nuns were to take their meals together in the refectory, eat the same food, and not keep snacks in their cells. The *typika* follow the basic precepts of Basil, particularly with respect to the spirit of moderation, but there are countless variations between monasteries as far as specific rules are concerned.

Still I shall hazard a description of a fairly typical Byzantine monastery.⁸ It was founded in Constantinople in the fourteenth century by an aristocratic lady, and provided a home for several members of her family, including a daughter. Fifty nuns lived at the monastery, thirty of them choir sisters, responsible for singing the daily offices: twenty of the nuns performed basic housekeeping duties. Each nun had her own cell, but ate in common with her sisters in the refectory. The diet included bread, vegetables, fruit, fish, eggs and cheese, but never meat. Wine was considered a staple, and was served in generous portions; in cold weather a hot drink of cumin-flavored water was also available. Each nun had specific duties, whether singing in the choir, working in the kitchen, overseeing the refectory, serving as infirmarian or gatekeeper. The nuns also did handwork such as spinning and weaving, reciting psalms as they worked; if literate, they would devote many hours to study of the Scriptures or saints' lives. They received a new habit once a year, and a monthly supply of soap, and oil for their lamps. The nuns were expected to remain within the convent, except on special occasions, such as a visit to a sick relative. When a nun did go outside the convent, she was always to be accompanied by two elderly nuns. Nuns might also leave the cloister to visit a local shrine, to attend a funeral of a relative, or on convent business, such as to give testimony in a lawsuit involving monastic property.

The convent was headed by a superior, elected by members of the monastic community. She had responsibility for the spiritual and material well-being of the nuns in her charge, and had to combine the talents of businesswoman, psychologist and spiritual leader. The abbess held this position for life, and could be deposed only for grave cause.

Why did Byzantine men and women enter monasteries?⁹ For many it was a true vocation; from childhood some Byzantine boys and girls dreamed of renouncing the world, and dedicating themselves to Christ. Usually this decision met with parental approval, since the monastic vocation was so common and so admired in the Byzantine world. Some parents in fact dedicated their children to God at infancy, often in thanksgiving at the birth of a child after a long period of infertility. Sometimes whole families took

⁸ The following paragraph is a summary of the *typikon* of the nunnery of the Virgin of Sure Hope (Θεοτόκος τῆς Βεβαίας Ἑλπίδος), published by H. Delehay in *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues* (Brussels 1921), pp. 18–105.

⁹ On this topic, see A. M. Talbot, "Late Byzantine Nuns: By Choice or Necessity?" *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985), 103–17.

the monastic habit together, especially at a time of crisis, such as the death of one of the parents. The mother of Gregory Palamas, one of the most famous of Orthodox theologians, wanted to enter a convent right after her husband died, even though it would have meant abandoning her five children, who ranged in age from a few months to seven years. It was only with difficulty that she was persuaded to remain at home until her children were grown; when they were teenagers, they all ended up taking monastic vows.

Even if they did not take the habit themselves, many Byzantines became benefactors of monasteries, making donations of cash, sacred vessels or liturgical books for the church, land or income-producing properties such as a factory or mill. The reward for such donations was commemoration after one's death; the perusal of *typika* makes it clear that prayers for one's salvation in perpetuity were of immense importance to the pious Byzantine. Notices in the *typika* might read as follows:

Since the bishop of Ephesus . . . gave our convent 400 gold pieces a requiem should be celebrated for him . . . and also celebrate the requiem of the bishop of Mytilene on the anniversary of his death, as best you can. For he donated to the convent a solid gold icon of the Mother of God, decorated with precious stones and pearls, and stoles and armlets, also with pearls.¹⁰

IV. Cultural Activities

My description of a typical nunnery deliberately omitted any mention of intellectual or artistic activities, because nuns rarely engaged in the copying or illumination of manuscripts, or the composition of hymns, saints' lives, theological treatises or historical chronicles.¹¹ In a number of male monasteries, however, there were scriptoria for the production of manuscripts, and many of the most important literary figures of Byzantium were monks who worked in the confines of a cloister. Monastic libraries were usually limited to the basic liturgical books, with perhaps a few volumes of patristic commentaries or saints' lives; they almost never contained works of ancient Greek authors. A few libraries, however, benefited from the personal collection of their founders, and held a wider range of books. Such was the library of Chora in fourteenth-century Constantinople, the best library in the capital, where a number of the leading classical philologists of the day prepared editions and commentaries on classical authors. Monasteries tended to specialize in certain areas. One might have a scriptorium that produced only liturgical manuscripts in a

¹⁰ Typikon of Convent of Sure Hope, ed. Delehay, *Deux typika*, p. 102.

¹¹ On the limited cultural activities of Byzantine convents, see A. M. Talbot, "Bluestocking Nuns: Intellectual Life in the Convents of Late Byzantium," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), 604-18.

distinctive script; another monastery might be an important center for the composition of hymns and religious poetry.

Formal schooling was not a function of Byzantine monasteries; in fact, a number of *typika* specifically forbade the admission of children for educational purposes, but monasteries played a significant role in maintaining the culture of Byzantium. Literate nuns were encouraged to teach their illiterate sisters their letters, since a certain degree of literacy was required in order to chant the office, maintain the monastery accounts or serve as librarian or archivist. A high percentage of Byzantine manuscripts were produced in monastic scriptoria, and the monastic environment provided the tranquillity and spiritual stimulation necessary for the composition of religious poetry or a theological tract.

V. Charitable Functions

Monks and nuns provided a variety of community services.¹² I have already mentioned that free food was generally made available for the poor; distributions were made at the monastery gate on a regular schedule. On special feastdays, there might even be distributions of small coins.

Several monasteries had hospitals attached, where the best medical care available was provided. The *typikon* for a twelfth-century monastery in Constantinople, the Pantokrator, supplies a detailed description of the organization and management of such a hospital.¹³ It had five wards, with 61 beds in all. One ward was for patients with wounds and injuries, another for patients with diseases of the eyes or internal organs; there was also a 12-bed ward for women. The patients wore special hospital gowns; their own clothes were washed and made ready for them to wear when cured!

Hospital personnel were numerous: about one staff member per patient. The female ward was served by a woman doctor, whose salary was half that of her male colleagues. The staff also included pharmacists to prepare herbal medicines, laundresses, cooks, and four gravediggers (which seems a rather high figure for a 61-bed hospital!). The patients were limited to a strictly vegetarian diet, consisting mostly of bread and vegetables. There was a large bathroom, where the patients were entitled to two baths a week. This hospital was reserved for the use of laymen; the monks had their own six-bed infirmary.

The monastic complex of the Pantokrator also included a hospice or old people's home, designated for the care of 24 men who were crippled or

¹² Much material on monastic philanthropy is found in two books by Demetrios Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, New Jersey 1968), and *Poverty, Society and Philanthropy in the Late Medieval Greek World* (forthcoming).

¹³ P. Gautier, ed., "Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 32 (1974), 82–113; T. S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore 1985), pp. 12–19.

invalid. No one was eligible who was in good health and could provide for his own living by his own work. Each resident received an annual ration of bread, wine, dried vegetables, cheese and oil, plus wood for heating. If the pensioner became gravely ill, he could be admitted to the hospital. Separately from the monastic complex, the monastery also ran a leprosarium.

In addition to running old-age homes, where the elderly pensioners retained their lay status, monasteries also served the needs of the elderly Byzantine who decided to take monastic vows at an advanced age. Retirement to a monastery was a frequent solution to the problem of an older man or woman who either could not or did not wish to live with his children, and needed to find support and lodging outside the family circle. Sometimes it was even necessary for a married couple to separate and live in different monasteries. This was the case for the Byzantine historian George Sphrantzes and his wife Helen who found adoption of the monastic habit a welcome refuge, after their lives took a tragic turn in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Their two surviving children had died during captivity in the sultan's entourage, and by 1467 the formerly prosperous couple were without means of support. As Sphrantzes comments in his *History*, because he was "old, sick and penniless since the days of his enslavement [by the Turks]," he went first to the island of Leukas to seek a pension, "some yearly compensation," from its ruler. He was unsuccessful in his mission, however, and the next year, plagued by chronic rheumatism, he renounced his "secular clothes and assumed the habit," together with his wife.¹⁴

Even more frequently it was a widow or widower who would seek the solace of a monastery, which could provide food and lodging, companionship, nursing care, spiritual comfort, burial and commemoration in requiem masses, for those able to make the appropriate donation. Thus we read about a woman who was a refugee from the fourteenth-century Turkish occupation of Asia Minor and turned to monastic life, because she

was deprived of everything, and had no relative or any other consolation . . . she had no one to help her . . . she was in a strange and alien land and had no parents or husband.¹⁵

Many of the older inhabitants of monasteries, who retired there late in life, and might be considered a burden on monastic resources, were supported by a kind of pension, which they received in exchange for a contribution of land or money, usually 100 gold pieces. The case of a thirteenth-century widow called Zoe exemplifies the type of financial transaction which might

¹⁴ M. Philippides, tr., *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401–1477* (Amherst, Mass. 1980), p. 90.

¹⁵ B. Papoulia, "Die Vita des hl. Philotheos vom Athos," *Südostforschungen* 22 (1963), 274–76.

take place between a monastic community and an individual seeking security in her declining years. Toward the end of her life Zoe found herself without any familial support, and turned to the nunnery of Nea Petra in Thessaly to provide for her old age. In return for a donation of her ancestral property, including three vineyards, four fields, a fig tree and two houses, the convent agreed to admit her as a nun and support her for the rest of her life. Equally important, from Zoe's point of view, at the time of her death she was assured of proper burial and commemoration at the convent in requiem masses.

Younger monks and nuns considered it a pious duty to care for their aged colleagues. A tenth-century saint's life has preserved a graphic description of the final illness of Anna, the retired abbess of a convent in Thessalonike. Because of her failing vision, the centenarian had slipped and fallen in the courtyard, dislocated her hip, and consequently was bedridden for the seven years until her death. During the entire period she was tended by a younger nun, Theodora, who looked after her every need and even fed her. Theodora's patience was sorely tried during the final three years when Anna had become senile, and struck and cursed her dutiful attendant. She persevered, however, mindful of the Biblical injunction, "Child, care for your father in his old age, and do not cause him grief in his lifetime. And if he should lose his senses, have mercy on him and do not dishonor him. . . ." ¹⁶

VI. Economic Aspects of Monasticism

Monastic complexes were able to function, and to support cultural and philanthropic activities, only if they had a strong financial base. Many Byzantine monasteries were well endowed and survived for centuries, some to this day. Others could not afford to repair the roof and fell into ruins. As previously noted, Byzantines considered it a pious duty to make donations to monasteries, and many monastic institutions were able to accumulate substantial wealth and real estate, both in the form of farmland and urban workshops and houses at lease. Both urban and rural monasteries ran agricultural estates, and appointed a steward to handle business affairs, such as collecting rents from tenants and selling the harvest. The following excerpts from a property inventory give an idea of the holdings of an urban convent of ca. 1300; most of the donations were made by the foundress, the Dowager Empress Theodora Palaiologina, mother of Michael VIII:

From the estates of Achilleion and Barys . . . a portion worth 300 gold pieces; included . . . is the fish hatchery . . . in addition the mill of Thermene . . . also the vineyard of Emporianos . . . the village called

¹⁶ *Vita S. Theodoraе Thess.*, ed. E. Kurtz, *Des Klerikers Gregorios Bericht über Leben, Wunderthaten und Translation der hl. Theodora von Thessalonich nebst der Metaphrase des Johannes Staurakios* [=Записки И. Академии Наук 8, сер. по историко-филологическому обществу, том 6, № 1] (St. Petersburg 1902), p. 21.

Nymphai . . . whose revenues from *paroikoi* (dependent peasants) and arable land are 260 gold pieces . . . another village, Skoteinon . . . whose income from *paroikoi* is 183 gold pieces plus 70 gold pieces from four mills, and 100 gold pieces from arable land of 2600 units.

Within Constantinople, among the properties owned by the nunnery were three vineyards, numerous gardens, six mills, and about 20 houses.¹⁷

Since monastic properties were generally exempt from taxation, vast amounts of land were removed from the tax rolls; at various times emperors tried to limit the foundation of new monasteries or their acquisition of more land.¹⁸ At the same time the monasteries saved the state money by performing some health and welfare services that in other societies might be provided by the government.

VII. Centers of Byzantine Monasticism

Byzantine monasteries were located both in cities and in isolated rural areas. As one would expect, the capital of Constantinople was an important monastic center, housing several hundred monasteries and convents. Some were distinguished for their libraries and scriptoria, others for their icons and relics, a few for their hospital or old-age home. Little survives today of these religious houses except for a few churches, like Chora and Pammakaristos, whose gleaming mosaics testify to the wealth of their aristocratic patrons.¹⁹ At the site of the Stoudios monastery, which once held hundreds of monks, now stands only a roofless basilica.

Rural monasteries have fared much better in surviving the centuries of Arab and/or Turkish occupation. A visitor to St. Catherine's in the Sinai desert, to the mountainous peninsula of Athos, or to the rocky spires of Meteora in Thessaly, can still witness and experience the living tradition of Byzantine monasticism. Oldest and most remote is St. Catherine's, built by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century with a massive fortification wall to protect the monks from Bedouin raids. Continuously inhabited for 14 centuries, the monastery is an incomparable repository of the Byzantine heritage, housing a collection of over 2,000 icons, including extremely rare examples of encaustic painting from the pre-iconoclastic period. The library contains more than 3,000 manuscripts in a variety of languages (Greek, Arabic, Georgian, Syriac and Slavic) which reflect the diversity of the monks who have lived at Sinai.²⁰

¹⁷ *Typikon* of convent of Lips, ed. Delehay, *Deux typica*, pp. 130–34.

¹⁸ See P. Charanis, "The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 4 (1948), 51–118.

¹⁹ P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, 4 vols. (New York–Princeton 1966–1975; H. Belting, C. Mango, D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul* (Washington, D.C. 1978).

²⁰ J. Galey, *Sinai and the Monastery of St. Catherine* (London 1979); G. H. Forsyth, K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. The Church and Fortress of Justinian*.

The Athos promontory was inhabited only by hermits until the tenth century, when the first monasteries were established there. At its zenith the "Holy Mountain" attracted thousands of monks, because it combined the reputation of its holy men with an isolated locale of stunning rugged beauty and proximity to the major cities of Thessalonike and Constantinople. Its dozens of monasteries, many of them still functioning, have played a vital role in preserving the traditions of Orthodoxy and hundreds of Byzantine manuscripts.²¹

The Meteora (literally "floating in the air") monasteries were a relatively late foundation, as monks did not begin to inhabit the rocky pillars until the fourteenth century. The eroded conglomerate formations, reminiscent of an other-worldly lunar landscape, are riddled with caves which provided shelter for hermits; more ambitious monks laboriously constructed entire monastic complexes atop some of the larger spires. Originally accessible only by rope ladders or by baskets hauled up by windlass, the monasteries offered particularly safe refuge during the final turbulent years of the Byzantine Empire, and during the four centuries of Turkish occupation.²²

VIII. Conclusion

Byzantine monasticism appeared in many forms, ranging from isolated mountain hermitages to populous urban monasteries: many monks moved frequently from one monastery to another, or shifted back and forth between a cenobitic and eremitic life style. People could take monastic vows at various stages of life, and in the monastery could pursue intellectual interests, engage in artistic or philanthropic activity, manual labor or a life of asceticism and prayer. Monasticism played such a key role in the Byzantine Empire, because it was a varied, flexible and fluid institution, which responded to the needs of society and affected the lives of people of all classes. At the same time monastic routines and rituals offered security and stability, a safe haven from the tempestuous events of the outside world. Monastic spirituality reflected the essence of Eastern Orthodoxy, a tradition that lives on today in the hymnography, music, art and architecture which still survive and demonstrate Byzantine creativity at its best.[‡]

Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Plates (Ann Arbor, Mich. 1973); K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. The Icons. I. From the 6th to the 10th c.* (Princeton 1976).

²¹ E. Amand de Mendieta, *La presque île des caloyers: le Mont Athos* (Bruges 1955); S. M. Pelekanides, *The Treasures of Mt. Athos*, 4 vols. (Athens 1974-).

²² D. M. Nicol, *Meteora, the Rock Monasteries of Thessaly* (London 1975).

[‡] *Editor's Note:* The author of this article is Executive Editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (in preparation).

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Author(s): V. A. Kolve

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Ganymede / Son of Getron: Medieval Monasticism and the Drama of Same-Sex Desire

By V. A. Kolve

We need to know the writing of the past, and to know it
differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a
tradition, but to break its hold over us.

—Adrienne Rich,
On Lies, Secrets, and Silence

Whereas feminist theory has revitalized our understanding of the culture of medieval Europe, gay theory has only recently begun to review and rewrite that period of our past. Simon Gaunt, writing in 1992, offered several explanations for this state of affairs—including the homophobia of many educational institutions and a notable lack of visible gay scholars in the field. But the following explanation, I think, goes deepest, and is historically the most intractable. However much medieval women may have differed from modern women, he reminds us, they are “clearly and prominently visible within [medieval] systems of representation.” Though we need to reconstruct their experience with care, since most of the records were produced by men, there is nonetheless no shortage of material. Not so for men whose desire was stirred by other men: “one of the prime difficulties in conducting research on the experience of gay people in the Middle Ages is simply lack of data. With whose experience do we identify?”¹

It is a real problem. The codifications of canon law, like the punishments measured out in penitential manuals, offer only unfriendly witness, and that in the briefest of terms.² There is not even a satisfactory word to name the subject of

I should like to thank David Bevington, John Bowers, Joseph Bristow, Christopher Cannon, Carolyn Dinshaw, William Handley, Rachel Jacoff, Henry Ansgar Kelly, Sarah McNamer, and especially Bruce Holsinger for helping me think through the larger implications of this essay.

¹ Simon Gaunt, “Gay Studies and Feminism: A Medievalist’s Perspective,” *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 13 (1992), 3–4. In the last decade, essays and books by a number of medieval scholars, including Carolyn Dinshaw, Glen Burger, Allen Frantzen, Louise Fradenburg, Steven Kruger, John Bowers, Karma Lochrie, Bruce Holsinger, and Simon Gaunt himself, have begun to make a significant difference. Three collections of essays fairly represent the current state of discussion: Clare A. Lees, Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara, eds., *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, *Medieval Cultures* 7 (Minneapolis, 1994); Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, eds., *Premodern Sexualities* (New York, 1996); Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz, eds., *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, *Medieval Cultures* 11 (Minneapolis, 1997).

² But see Allen J. Frantzen, “Between the Lines: Queer Theory, the History of Homosexuality, and Anglo-Saxon Penitentials,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996), 255–96, for a demonstration of what those penitentials, read carefully, can reveal. On canon law concerning the

our search. "Homosexuality," as an abstract noun, first appears in a German pamphlet written in 1869 discussing *Homosexualität* as part of a proposed penal code for the North German Federation. By the time it first appears in English, just prior to the 1890s, it has already become bound up with certain explanatory ideas—medical, pathological, psychiatric—unknown some two or three decades before. Because premodern societies, in contrast, seem to have focused on deeds rather than doers, David Halperin, in an influential essay, suggested we restrict the term "homosexuality" to same-sex desire as it has been experienced and represented in the past century only. Before then, he argues, sex between men was judged variously—accepted and even idealized in classical Greece, tolerated in classical Rome, stigmatized in the Christian Middle Ages—but it was thought of as an activity any man might engage in, not the expression of a certain kind of personality limited to homosexuals alone.³

The word "gay" is more problematic still, despite John Boswell's vigorous attempt to insert it into the lexicon of the medieval past. Though it would be useful indeed as a way of describing "persons who are conscious of erotic preference for their own gender," his evidence is neither early enough nor precise enough to do service, and he assumes both a constituency ("gay people") and a quality of spirit ("gay sensibility") that have seemed anachronistic to many scholars.⁴

"crime against nature," originating with the Third Lateran Council (1179), see James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 398–400; he notes that civil law punished sexual perversion more harshly than did canon law.

³ David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York, 1990), chap. 1. Since I hope this essay will interest students of gay culture, history, and theory as well as medievalists who may be little read in such discourse, I provide in these opening pages more introductory theory than the first group will require, and in the pages that follow more information about medieval monasticism (occasionally elementary) than the second group may expect. I ask the indulgence of each, in the interest of the other.

⁴ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980), chap. 2, esp. pp. 41–46; the evidence adduced in n. 6 is thin and somewhat strained. Glenn W. Olsen, "St. Anselm and Homosexuality," *Anselm Studies: An Occasional Journal* 2, Proceedings of the Fifth International Saint Anselm Conference (White Plains, N.Y., 1988), pp. 93–141, uses Anselm as a test case to dissent (with care and learning) from many of Boswell's conclusions. Warren Johansson and William A. Percy, "Homosexuality," in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York, 1996), pp. 155–89, offer a concise account of the subject, also in critique of Boswell. But see Boswell, "Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York, 1989), pp. 17–36, for a defense of the qualified essentialism his position implies, and an important new book, Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago, 1997), for evidence that medieval moralists often wrote as though there were indeed something like a sodomitic underground, flourishing especially among the educated, that was dangerous to the Christian community at large. For example, Paul of Hungary's *Summa of Penance*, written c. 1219–21, declares, "some count the sin as nothing and . . . in some regions men are abused almost publicly as if from a sort of urbanity (literally, 'courtliness,' *curialitas*), and those with whom they perpetrate this terrible and abominable vice are called charming (*gratiosos*)," quoted by Jordan, p. 99. In this handbook for confessors the digression on the sin against nature is so disproportionately long—occupying almost 40 percent of its treatise on sin—that we may assume, with Jordan, "that some of the urgency in Paul's arguments is an urgency about convincing confessors to treat the sin as the serious thing it is" (pp. 94, 99). This may reflect Paul's belief that sodomy was most often found among priests and monks (p. 113).

Even those venerable terms of abuse “sodomy” and “sodomite” will not serve us very well. Unlike “homosexual” or “gay,” their *implied* etymology is appropriately ancient, rooted in the biblical story of Sodom itself. But what exactly the sin of Sodom *was* is far from clear—it has been variously interpreted by Christian commentators—and the abstract noun “sodomy” (medieval Latin *sodomia*) does not occur before the eleventh century, when it was invented to bring together, explain, and stigmatize “desires, dispositions, and acts that had earlier been classified differently and separately”—as Mark Jordan has carefully demonstrated in his recent book, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*.⁵ The history of the word is wildly various, embracing, in any full survey of medieval contexts, not only sexual love between men but inhospitality to strangers, intercourse with animals, ordinary masturbation, sex between men and women when they do not mean to make a baby, even sex between men and women with the woman on top. If we were to use the word as broadly as it was used in the Middle Ages, to identify and demonize a broad range of social transgressions (including heresy itself),⁶ we could account for a good deal of ordinary human life in its terms. But the historical experience of men whose affectional and/or sexual orientation was primarily toward other men would remain almost as invisible as before, and the experience of women-oriented women would remain, as it has always been, historically less visible still.

So we have little choice but to acknowledge our modernity, admit that our interest in the past is always (and by no means illegitimately) born of present concerns, and declare that sex and sexual desire between men at any period are part of the history of what we call homosexuality, even as we struggle to write that history in ways attentive to shifts in ideology and social practice. Contemporary historians, for instance, write about Greek “science,” medieval “science,” eighteenth-century “science” without embarrassment, even though what we mean by science in the twentieth century is very different indeed. History, by definition, is a chronicle of change.

In this essay then I will use the words “homosexual” and “gay” as a way of acknowledging the modern place from which we interrogate the historical record, while doing my best to avoid anachronism and facile suppositions of sameness. (Exaggerated suppositions of difference, it must be said, can be equally distort-

⁵ Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, esp. chap. 2. He finds in Peter Damian’s *Book of Gomorrah* (c. 1049) the first use of *sodomia* as a noun, a coinage parallel to *blasphemia* and closely related to *luxuria*, the latter used by the Romans to group together a variety of behaviors considered dangerous to republican virtue. References to “sins of the Sodomites” occur much earlier, of course, as does the adjective “sodomitic”—e.g., *sodomitico more*—meaning whatever “the sins of the Sodomites” were taken to be by the author at hand. These adjectival versions are historically particular, however unclear the history referred to, whereas the abstract noun “sodomy” presents itself as an essence, precedent to particular historical acts: “a sameness found wherever the acts are performed” (p. 43). It was invented in order that certain kinds of acts could be punished. (See Jordan, pp. 31–37, “Misreading Sodom,” and pp. 40–41 on why the grammatical form matters so.) As his book makes clear, “The fearful abstraction in our use of the term is medieval, as are our prurient confusions over what the word really means” (p. 1). On the general imprecision of sins or behaviors named after geographical places, see his discussion, p. 7.

⁶ On sodomy and heresy, see Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 283–86.



Fig. 1. The rape of Ganymede.
Capital, first pillar, south side of nave, Vézelay, Basilica of Saint
Mary Magdalen.
(See n. 134, below, for all illustration sources and credits.)

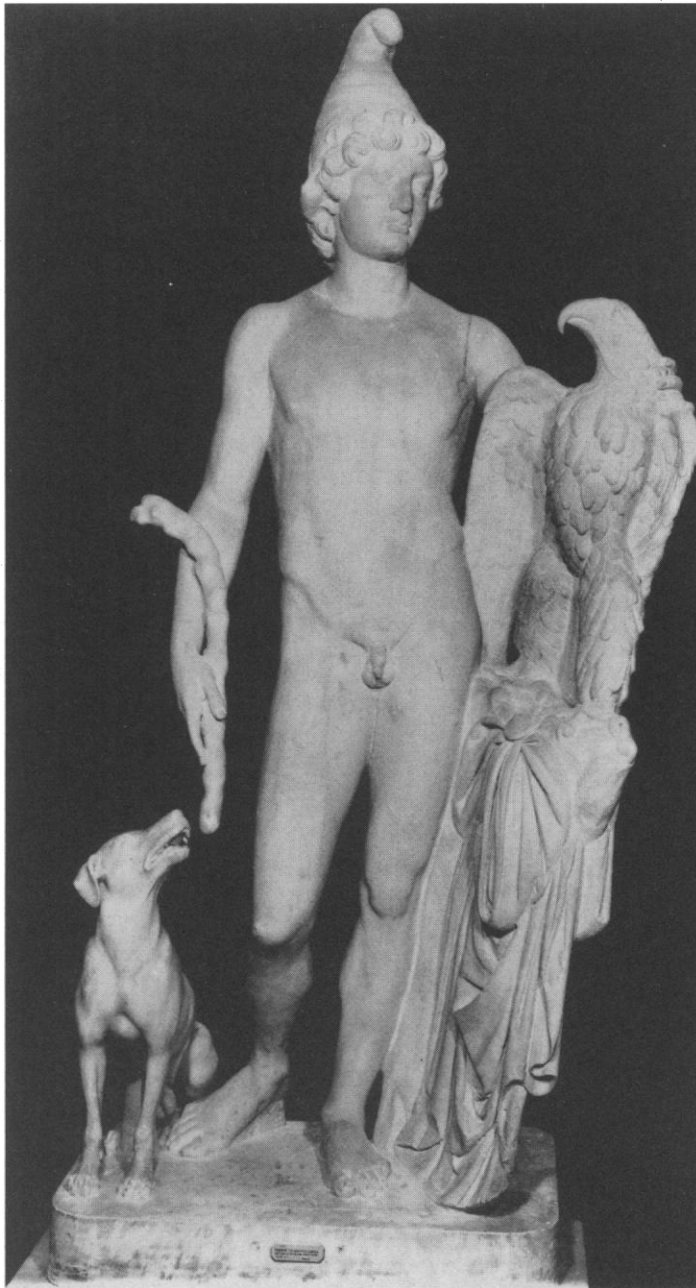
ing.)⁷ Human deeds express human desires, and just as deeds repeated over and over eventually become patterns of behavior, so desires experienced over and over inevitably suggest predisposition and propensity—a condition, if not innate, at least eventually constitutive of character or identity. Medieval confessional teaching, for instance, knew perfectly well that habitual acts of gluttony define a glutton, habitual acts of fornication a lecher, habitual acts of sodomy a sodomite.⁸ Halperin himself, in a recent lecture, has argued that an excessive distinction between deeds and identity has been misderived from Michel Foucault's writings (and from his own exegesis of Foucault).⁹ But caution remains appropriate all the same. I shall use the modern words with care, excluding from their valence nineteenth-century notions of medical pathology or innate psychological type, while bringing into that historical orbit deeds and desires recorded of men who would not have thought of themselves as "homosexual" in our terms.

The subject of this essay is a late-twelfth-century St. Nicholas play called *Filius Getronis* (*The Son of Getron*) that has been little studied, and never in this context. I want to set it against the anxiety occasioned in medieval monasteries concerning same-sex desire, especially across generations, between men and youths or boys, and the ways in which the monastic community sought to control such desire and rechannel it into acceptable forms. My subject is not man/boy love in the modern criminalized sense of that term, but rather the ways in which medieval monasticism acknowledged the possibility of such emotion, sometimes (as in this play) allowed it an unusual degree of dignity, and urgently sought viable forms for its transcendence. The play itself will be at the center of all that follows. But we can best approach it by way of another cultural artifact—a twelfth-century stone capital in the Basilica of Saint Mary Magdalen at Vézelay (Fig. 1), whose subject—otherwise unparalleled in surviving ecclesiastical art—for a long time puzzled art historians. It was not until 1932 that Jean Adhémar correctly identified it as rep-

⁷ Gregory W. Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), argues powerfully against "a sort of paranoia of historicization, a phenomenon in which the effort to examine sexual difference in the past, especially as it might relate to the inscription of the subject, is immediately stigmatized as anachronistic" (p. xi); see esp. his chap. 6 ("Coda: The Essential Sodomite"). In truth, there is no single version of "modern" homosexuality either, but instead a large array of practices and discursive explanations. One unintended consequence of overemphasizing the difference (the alterity) of the past has been an implicit homogenization of twentieth-century gay identity.

⁸ This position is supported on historical grounds by Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, pp. 163–64: "The idea of an identity built around the genital configuration of one's sexual partners is, in our tradition, the product of Christian theology. . . . When we lesbians and gays think of ourselves as members of a tribe, as a separate people or race, we echo medieval theology's preoccupation with the Sodomites. . . . The idea that same-sex pleasure constitutes an identity of some kind is clearly the work of medieval theology, not of nineteenth-century forensic medicine." But he is careful to admit that historical "homosexualities" differ, as well as notions about identity itself.

⁹ "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality," a lecture Halperin has delivered at various places, including UCLA on January 20, 1998; it will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Representations*. Several of the essays in Fradenburg and Freccero, eds., *Premodern Sexualities*, take issue with the consequences of reading homosexuality as a new invention, including Bruce W. Holsinger's "Sodomy and Resurrection: The Homoerotic Subject of the *Divine Comedy*." He proposes instead a "homoerotic subjectivity" that is "historically contingent, fleeting, unstable, produced at certain moments, by certain texts, and through specific cultural practices" but that nevertheless works "to constitute human beings as subjects at specific historical moments" (p. 244).



**Fig. 2. Statue of Ganymede (Roman, based on a Hellenistic original).
Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale.**

resenting the story of Ganymede—the abduction of a beautiful young Trojan prince, snatched up by an eagle to serve as Jupiter’s cupbearer among the gods.¹⁰ Jupiter’s love for Ganymede incurs Juno’s wrath, and it is prominently named, near the beginning of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (1.28), as one of the causes of the Trojan War. Several details on the Vézelay capital establish the Virgilian account (5.255–57) as the immediate source of its inspiration. But the story was also known from a text even more popular in the twelfth-century schoolroom, the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (10.155–61), in which version Jupiter himself takes on the form of an eagle in order to abduct the boy.¹¹

Ovid’s version proved the more influential in both Greek and Roman art, which often show Ganymede yielding himself luxuriously to the eagle’s embrace.¹² Sometimes, as in a statue now in Naples (Fig. 2, a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original), the boy seems the dominant partner, with an expression John Boswell characterized as suggesting “tranquillity and acquiescence” rather than abduction or struggle or fear.¹³ In Renaissance art as well, the subject was often treated in an idealized

¹⁰ Figure 1: Ganymede capital from the Basilica of Saint Mary Magdalen in Vézelay, first pillar, south side of the nave. For reproductions of the other capitals in this church and the chronology of its building, see François Vogade, Louis Hauteceur, and Auguste Allemand, *Vézelay* (Bellegard, 1974); figs. 103, 104 show the Ganymede carving, which they date c. 1125–30. For the brief note by Adhémar, “L’enlèvement de Ganymède sur un chapiteau de Vézelay,” see *Bulletin monumental . . . de la Société Française d’Archéologie* 91 (1932), 290–92.

¹¹ In *Aeneid* 1.28 we are told that Juno “was always jealous of the whole Trojan race, and could not forget how Ganymede had been stolen and honoured,” replacing her daughter Hebe as cupbearer; it is one of the causes of the Trojan War. In 5.255–57 the rape itself is narrated, in describing a cloak given to the victor in the funeral games for Anchises. On it is woven “a design showing Ganymede the young prince of leafy Mount Ida, starting the fleet stags, casting his javelins, and looking just as if he was breathless in eager pursuit; and then seized and carried aloft in hooked talons by the bird which is armour-bearer to Jupiter, and which had swooped from Mount Ida to capture him; there were the aged tutors, vainly stretching their hands towards the sky, and watch-dogs too, barking after the prince and spending their fury on the air” (Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, rev. ed. [Harmondsworth, Eng., 1958], pp. 28, 126–27). Ovid recounts it differently: “The king of the gods was once fired with love for Phrygian Ganymede, and when that happened Jupiter found another shape preferable to his own. Wishing to turn himself into a bird, he none the less scorned to change into any save that which can carry his thunderbolts. Then without delay, beating the air on borrowed pinions, he snatched away the shepherd of Ilium, who even now mixes the winecups, and supplies Jove with nectar, to the annoyance of Juno” (Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Mary M. Innes [Harmondsworth, Eng., 1955], p. 229). On the development of the myth, see Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore, 1993), pp. 557–60.

¹² For antique representations, see the bibliography in Ilene H. Forsyth, “The Ganymede Capital at Vézelay,” *Gesta* 15 (1976), 245, nn. 2–3, together with figs. 1–23 in Kyle M. Phillips, Jr., “Subject and Technique in Hellenistic-Roman Mosaics: A Ganymede Mosaic from Sicily,” *Art Bulletin* 42 (1960), 243–62. Gerda Kempter, *Ganymed: Studien zur Typologie, Ikonographie und Ikonologie*, Dissertationen zur Kunstgeschichte 12 (Cologne, 1980), offers a comprehensive range of reproductions from the visual arts, mostly later (figs. 1–120). James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven, Conn., 1986), and Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford, Calif., 1991), offer sophisticated studies of Renaissance appropriations of the myth, along with numerous illustrations. A Roman copy of a lost bronze statue by Leochares, c. 350 B.C., the most influential of all Greek models, is reproduced in Kempter, fig. 1, Phillips, fig. 23, and Barkan, fig. 2.

¹³ Figure 2: Ganymede (Roman, based on a Hellenistic original) in Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale. It is reproduced by Boswell, *Christianity*, fig. 4, with commentary below; see also his fig. 6.



Fig. 3. The devil rejoices at the rape of Ganymede.
Detail of Fig. 1.

way—as in a famous drawing made by Michelangelo for Tommaso de' Cavalieri, the young nobleman whom he loved,¹⁴ where the youth's experience is imagined as almost ecstatic in its assent.

Not so, however, in this carving from Vézelay, c. 1125–30.¹⁵ Other times, other mores. The medieval version offers us instead a scene of terror, with the boy hanging helpless in the beak of the eagle, his arms flailing and his tunic flaring upward like flame. The shock of the event is conveyed by two further details found only in Virgil's text: a barking dog and the presence of guardians, helpless to do anything but look on. More powerful still—and obviously owing nothing to Virgil—is the presence of a devil, pulling at his mouth with two fingers, in joyful derision at the abduction of a boy by a god (Fig. 3). Though Jean Adhémar published his discovery simply as a classical theme surviving into Romanesque art, he allowed that a moral intention might explain this choice of subject—a moral John

¹⁴ See Saslow, *Ganymede*, figs. 1.1, 1.2 (pp. 20–21), and his discussion of Michelangelo's use of the myth as personal imagery (chap. 1). The drawing exists in two versions, one a copy of the other.

¹⁵ For a view of the other (damaged) side, where once a second guardian, perhaps a mother, could be seen, see Kempter, *Ganymed*, fig. 3.

of Salisbury had expressed, in a passage from the *Policraticus*, warning against the dangers of hunting. But the passage in question—which has virtually nothing to do with hunting—Adhémar consigned in Latin to a final footnote, where it could sit in decent scholarly obscurity.¹⁶

Some four decades later, Ilene Forsyth pursued the matter more deeply, noting in particular the child's great fear: "he presses his hands together desperately as if in prayer; his eyes bulge in panic; his hair literally stands on end, and his mouth opens to utter a hideous scream as the twisted, slight body disappears above. . . . Here Ganymede, the young hunter of the classical myth, is himself the hunted one." The carving, as she sees it, is utterly "antithetical to the concept underlying the ancient story. Instead of a joyous apotheosis to an eternal life of youth, beauty and erotic pleasure among the gods on Olympus, the Romanesque boy appears at the very brink of damnation."¹⁷ Its subject is pederasty and rape, not the pleasurable good fortune of a mortal who finds himself beloved by a god.

That indeed is what medieval commentators mostly found in the story. When John of Salisbury in the *Policraticus*, c. 1159, attacked hunting as unsuitable to noblemen (the passage buried in a footnote by Jean Adhémar above), he had in mind certain vices he believed it fostered and encouraged, pederasty among them, as exemplified by the story of the young Trojan prince. Ancient authors, he wrote, "fabled that the Dardanian hunter [Ganymede] had been caught up to heaven by an eagle, to serve first as Jove's cupbearer and then for purposes of *illicit and unnatural love* . . ." (emphasis mine).¹⁸ Forsyth uses this and a number of other

¹⁶ Jean Adhémar published this discovery again, with only slightly increased candor, in his *Influences antiques dans l'art du moyen âge français*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 7 (London, 1939), pp. 222–23. He suggests again that the capital stigmatizes a certain vice discussed by John of Salisbury (once more quoted in Latin, without paraphrase), and adds one further reference, to a twelfth-century poem in which Helen and Ganymede "discutent sur leur conception personnelle de l'amour."

¹⁷ Forsyth, "The Ganymede Capital," p. 242.

¹⁸ "In auras tradunt ab aquila Dardanum venatorem ad pocula, a quibus ad illicitos et innaturales transiret amplexus," *Policraticus* 1.4; PL 199:390. Quoted by Adhémar, "L'enlèvement," p. 292, n. 2, and in translation by Forsyth, p. 242. (Kempter, *Ganymed*, p. 23, notes that the Vézelay carving has nothing whatsoever to do with hunting or hunters.) I quote from John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers: Being a Translation of the First, Second, and Third Books and Selections from the Seventh and Eighth Books of the "Policraticus" of John of Salisbury*, trans. Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis, 1938), p. 14, where the passage continues: "quite properly, seeing that volatility is the characteristic of a winged creature and that pleasure, blind to sobriety, blushes not to prostitute itself indiscriminately." For the whole of the chapter on hunting (book 1, chap. 4), see *Frivolities*, pp. 13–26. However strained the connection of Ganymede to vices associated with hunting, the theme of hunting is important to the *Policraticus* as a whole; on it see Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), pp. 415–16. John briefly returns to effeminacy and sexual perversion in the court in book 3, chap. 13 (*Frivolities*, pp. 200–202).

A tradition associating the Trojans in general with sodomitic practice arose from the Ganymede myth. An extended episode in the twelfth-century *Roman d'Eneas* presents the queen mother trying to prevent her daughter from loving Eneas by denigrating his sexuality: "This wretch is of the sort who have hardly any interest in women. He prefers the opposite trade: he will not eat hens, but he loves very much the flesh of a cock. He would prefer to embrace a boy rather than you or any other woman. He does not know how to play with women, and would not parley at the wicket-gate; but he loves very much the breech of a young man. The Trojans are raised on this." He is, she continues, "a traitor [to Dido] and a sodomite. . . . [I]f he can attract [a] boy by means of you . . . he will gladly let

such texts, most prominently Peter Damian's ferocious *Book of Gomorrah* (c. 1049), to re-create the purpose of the Vézelay capital in its monastic setting. Its theme is sexual assault, and its protagonist a mocking devil placed on the pillar so as to "glare and gesture obscenely at the monks as they left the church through the south aisle," reentering the monastic precincts proper. The purpose of the image, in Forsyth's view, was to prevent the development of sexual friendships between monks and boys: "Ganymede is thus analogous to the typical oblate in the abbey, and the eagle a metaphor for those clerics and monks who would wantonly prey upon a boy's vulnerability."¹⁹

No one at the time would have thought this matter marginal or unimportant. In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries many monasteries had become significantly overcrowded, not only through a surge of new professions (converts from the world taking monastic vows), but through the continuing custom of child oblation: the donation of young children to monasteries by noble or well-to-do families, long before the child could comprehend, much less assent to, a monastic vocation. Figure 4, from an early-fourteenth-century book of canon law, shows a donation of this sort.²⁰ This way of disposing of surplus children—after the age of five in the early Middle Ages, after eleven or twelve in the centuries that will concern us here²¹—was culturally sanctioned for several reasons. It served to pro-

the boy mount you, if he in turn can ride him: he does not love coney fur. . . . It would quickly be the end of this life if all men were thus throughout the world. . . ." I quote from *Eneas: A Twelfth-Century French Romance*, trans. John A. Yunck, *Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies* 93 (New York, 1974), pp. 226–27 (lines 8565 ff.). See pp. 237–38 for Lavine's own doubts on this score, after Eneas apparently fails to return her love: "What my mother told me is the truth . . . women mean very little to him. He would like his pleasure from a boy, and will love no one except male whores. He has his Ganymede with him, and a very little of me is now enough for him." (And so on.) Eneas, in fact, is in love with her, too, but thinks it wise to conceal his feelings. Raymond Cormier, "Taming the Warrior: Responding to the Charge of Sexual Deviance in Twelfth-Century Vernacular Romance," in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture: Selected Papers from the Seventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1994), pp. 153–60, writes interestingly about this episode, with a full bibliography; so does Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), pp. 39–45, including the French text for most of the passages quoted in translation above. See also Simon Gaunt, "From Epic to Romance: Gender and Sexuality in the *Roman d'Enéas*," *Romanic Review* 83 (1992), 1–27. The *Eneit* of Heinrich von Veldeke contains similar accusations (Cormier, p. 157).

¹⁹ Forsyth, "The Ganymede Capital," p. 244. Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 251–52, takes note of this reading but would prefer something less judgmental: "It would not be surprising if the sculpture were intended simply as a mythological allusion"—an interpretation that utterly ignores the participation of a devil.

²⁰ Figure 4: Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, MS 5668-5669, fol. 108r (Gratian's *Decretum*, with the gloss of Bartholomaeus Brixiensis), c. 1320, from the Benedictine abbey of Gembloux in Belgium. Also reproduced by Ludo J. R. Milis, *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men: Monasticism and Its Meaning to Medieval Society* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1992), p. 140; Milis's discussion of oblation, pp. 144–48, is brief but thoughtful.

²¹ John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York, 1988), pp. 304–8, discusses changes in the minimum age at which children could be donated or bound by profession—matters of institutional debate throughout the high Middle Ages. On the early history of oblation, its widespread adoption in the West, and this question of age, see Patricia A. Quinn, *Better Than the Sons of Kings: Boys and Monks in the Early Middle Ages*, *Studies in History and Culture* 2 (New York, 1989), pp. 27–34, 199 (here-



Fig. 4. Child oblation.
Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, MS 5668-5669,
Gratian's *Decretum* with the gloss of Bartholomaeus Brixiensis,
fol. 108r, Belgian, c. 1320.

tect the wealth and lands of the nobility against the claims of multiple heirs (first-born sons were rarely “donated”) as well as against the need to provide rich dowries for daughters who proved difficult to marry.²² But no less important, the donation of a child allowed wealthy families to participate in the merits of a monastic life by association; it allowed them to earn, both directly (by the sacrifice of their children) and by proxy (the blameless lives lived by those children within monastic walls), God’s goodwill and the remission of sin.²³ It also, in some cases, more controversially, provided a convenient way to get rid of handicapped or defective children.²⁴

Child oblation was ultimately rooted in Roman law and its concept of *patria potestas*, a father’s unlimited right to determine the life of his children. But it was thought of, more specifically, as authorized by Christ’s command, “Let the little children come unto me.” A number of Old Testament precedents were crucial to its rationale: Anna’s dedication of the infant Samuel to the Lord; Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac his son; and Samson’s life as a Nazarite, vowed on his behalf by his mother at his birth. To these the apocryphal gospels added the presentation of Mary in the Temple, where she was left to be raised in strict virginity from the age of three.²⁵ Though the custom of monastic oblation is ancient, predating the fourth-century Rule of St. Basil, it was given significant place there, and again in the Rule of the Master, from the first quarter of the sixth century. But it was the Rule of St. Benedict, completed c. 530–40, that gave oblation its crucial importance in the West.²⁶

Benedict institutionalized child oblation in these words: “If a member of the nobility offers his son to God in the monastery, and the boy himself is too young, the parents draw up the document mentioned above; then, at the presentation of

after referred to as “Quinn”); and Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel’s Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 12 (Leiden, 1996), on entry age, pp. 4, 28, 32–33, 44–45, 62–64, 71–72, 293–95 (hereafter referred to as “de Jong”).

²² “In the case of the wealthy, even a very large gift to the monastery was doubtless worthwhile if it freed an entire share of the patrimony: since they could not own property, oblates could lay no claim to an estate, and whatever the parents offered to give the monastery at the time of donation was the last material obligation they would ever have to the child” (Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 240).

²³ De Jong stresses this aspect of oblation more forcefully than does Boswell or Quinn. Especially in the Carolingian period, oblation was conceived as a holocaust offering, severing all family ties (p. 217), part of a system of gift exchange between man and God, reciprocal and continual, that was fundamental to early-medieval religious thought: gift giving that confidently, without cynical calculation, expected a return. On what the family may have expected to get out of it, see chap. 8, “Children as Gifts: A Conclusion,” esp. pp. 224–27.

²⁴ See Ulrich of Cluny’s complaint on this matter, quoted by Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 298, and the discussion following.

²⁵ On these precedents, see de Jong, pp. 156–63, and Quinn, pp. 15–16, 37 n. 39.

²⁶ De Jong, *In Samuel’s Image*, is now the definitive history of this custom from its beginnings through the Carolingian period and somewhat beyond; she leaves for further investigation “the evidence from the charters and cartularies of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and changing perceptions of child oblation in the later middle ages” (p. 14). For a provisional account of the later period, see her epilogue, p. 296 ff. Quinn, chap. 1, offers a brief but capacious history. For the *Regula Magistri*, see *The Rule of the Master*, trans. Luke Eberle (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1977), chap. 91 (pp. 267–71). It assumes adolescent oblates rather than children, and parental donation was optional, not required; but the monastery in which it was written clearly harbored children as well. See de Jong, pp. 30–32.

the gifts, they wrap the document itself and the boy's hand in the altar cloth. That is how they offer him." A ninth-century exposition of the rule asked the father to speak these words: "I wish to offer my son to Almighty God to serve Him in this monastery, since thus in the Law the Lord hath ordered the sons of Israel to offer their sons to God. I desire in like manner to offer this my son."²⁷

An adult postulant, in contrast, spoke his petition aloud in the oratory, in the presence of the whole community, while offering it also in writing on the altar, promising "stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience" in irrevocable terms.²⁸ Those who donated a child made such vows on his behalf, vows that for centuries were considered irrevocable.²⁹ Not until the twelfth century did a growing emphasis on sincerity of vocation bring about change. Thereafter an oblate was required to reaffirm the vows himself, usually at the age of fifteen, or freely to take his leave. But since a child raised in a monastery would have had little knowledge of life in the world—had indeed been raised in fear of it—understandably few records of such departures survive.³⁰

John Boswell studied oblation as a variant on the ancient custom of "abandoning children" in a brilliant book called *The Kindness of Strangers*, published in 1988. Oblation, he argued, despite its offense to modern sensibilities, was "in many ways the most humane form of abandonment ever devised in the West."³¹ In 1989 Patricia Quinn produced a thoughtful and far-ranging study, *Better Than the Sons of Kings*, focused upon oblation alone, and in 1996 Mayke de Jong published new and rigorous researches under the title *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*, focusing particularly (though not exclusively) on the Carolingian period. These books have been foundational to all that follows.³²

Quinn, too, was interested in the Vézelay capital, noting that the placement of the Ganymede image in the southeast corner of the nave, near the entrances to

²⁷ I quote from Timothy Fry, O.S.B., ed., *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes and Thematic Index*, abridged edition (Collegeville, Minn., 1981), chap. 59 (p. 119)—hereafter *Rule of St. Benedict*. For the ninth-century version, see Quinn, p. 90 (punctuation slightly modified). For an eleventh-century version, see *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc*, trans. David Knowles, Nelson Medieval Classics (London, 1951), pp. 110–11.

²⁸ *Rule of Saint Benedict*, chap. 58, p. 117.

²⁹ See Boswell, *Kindness*, pp. 232–33, 248, and de Jong for an extensive study (the question of irrevocable vows is a major subject of her book); see esp. pp. 2–3, 27, 40–42, 69, 96–99, 104, 183, 293–94.

³⁰ See Boswell, *Kindness*, pp. 311–17; and Mary Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," in *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd deMause (New York, 1974), p. 171 n. 181; hereafter cited as McLaughlin.

³¹ Boswell, *Kindness*, parts 2.5 and 3.8; I quote from pp. 238–39, where he continues: "Both the ideal of nonbiological, fostering love and the possibility of success despite humble beginnings were built into oblation and virtually never left to chance, as they were in the case of other forms of abandonment." Oblation, he writes, "placed a major form of abandonment not merely under public scrutiny, but under the control of the most admired, conscientious, orderly, and public-spirited institution of the Middle Ages . . . more likely than almost any other social body to discharge its responsibilities in good faith" (p. 255).

³² Full citations in n. 21 above. For de Jong's critique of Quinn (oddly brief, and unnecessarily dismissive) and of Boswell's *Kindness of Strangers* (more seriously engaged), see her pp. 5–6, 8, 288–89, 299–300.

both the boys' and monks' cloisters, marked "a zone where monks and children would have come together frequently to pray and sing. Secular visitors to a pilgrimage church like Vézelay would also have had the opportunity to observe this capital as they moved from side altar to side altar around the periphery of the building." In these terms, the capital, equating child seduction with rape, "stands as the Order's public condemnation of pederasty for its secular audience, and as a warning to the monastic residents."³³

The capital, we should note, dates from a time when the composition of Benedictine communities was undergoing profound change. Two phenomena were of particular importance. In the middle of the tenth century the order had raised the minimum entry age for oblation from five to twelve,³⁴ with the result that even the youngest children were unlikely to enter the monastery entirely innocent of sexual experimentation and play. This change was reinforced by a significant increase in adult professions—men entering the cloister with their character already formed in the secular world. For them there could be no recovery of the innocence of a monastic childhood, carefully protected over a period of five to eight years. The new orders that grew up in the twelfth century—the Carthusians, Cistercians, Augustinian canons, Premonstratensians, and the regular canons of St. Victor in Paris—chose for the most part to dispense with oblation altogether, wishing to practice greater asceticism, poverty, and regularity, as well as to avoid the burden of educating very young boys.³⁵ They sought new members only from among those who had reached their majority: for the Cistercians the age of fifteen,³⁶ for the Carthusians twenty. Even the Benedictines, as noted above, had raised their min-

³³ Quinn, pp. 185–87.

³⁴ Quinn, pp. 115, 199. But there are inconsistencies in the record, no doubt reflecting variations in practice: Orderic Vitalis, for instance, was made an oblate at the age of ten (c. 1085), well after the Benedictines, by most accounts, had raised the minimum age to twelve. In the Eastern Church the age of entry had been set at eleven from the seventh century on, with profession no earlier than the age of sixteen or seventeen (Quinn, p. 32).

³⁵ See Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France: Psycho-Historical Essays* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 9–12, for a suggestive account of this change ("New Recruitment—New Psychology"). On the decline of oblation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Quinn, pp. 195–202; de Jong, pp. 290–302; Boswell, *Kindness*, pp. 317–21, 401; and C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London, 1989), pp. 37–40, 125. Christopher Brooke (with photographs by Wim Swaan), *The Monastic World, 1000–1300* (New York, 1974), p. 88, reproduces manuscript evidence (figs. 142–43) recording the shift from a predominance of *pueri* to a predominance of *conversi* entering the monastery of Winchester between c. 1031 and c. 1090. From 1072 on, *iuvenes* are also registered, "a term of various connotation. . . ." For the minimum age set by the Cistercians and Carthusians, see McLaughlin, p. 173 n. 194.

³⁶ Though there were exceptions; see J. H. Lynch, "The Cistercians and Underage Novices," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 24 (1973), 283–97. The Cistercians never accepted oblates, but the reception of novices who were underage, or—almost as troubling—appeared to be, was "a modest, but persistent problem" (p. 287). In 1157 the general chapter raised the age of acceptance into the novitiate from fifteen to eighteen years. Local problems of recruitment and the need for unconditional gifts and donations sometimes caused this rule to be broken; and "even in Cistercian circles, the social and religious approval accorded to the dedication of a child to God must have acted in some degree to undermine strict adherence to the minimum age demanded for novices" (pp. 290–91). The order never disapproved of oblation among the Benedictines and Cluniacs; it simply sought a higher and stricter form of religious life for itself.

imum age of entry to twelve, and looked increasingly toward adults to replenish their communities. But child oblation as a method of recruitment never fully disappeared from Benedictine monasteries in the Middle Ages—the boys merely entered older—nor from the newer world of vocations, as the Franciscans' adoption of the custom makes clear.³⁷ Benedictine monasteries *always* included a younger generation, whether its youngest were aged five, as in the early centuries, or from twelve to fifteen, after the mid-tenth. It is the latter group—boys aged twelve to fifteen—that will chiefly concern us here, though it would be naive to imagine that the temptations posed (and experienced) by the younger monks (fifteen and older) would have differed all that much. And so what Peter Damian fulminated against in his *Book of Gomorrah* remained in fact always a possible source of danger: not only sex between boys or youths of the same age, but what he considered the worst of all possible clerical sins, the corruption of spiritual sons by ecclesiastical fathers.³⁸ The tenth-century English *Regularis concordia*, in calmer mood, was nevertheless attentive to the risks: "In the monastery moreover let neither monks nor abbot embrace or kiss, as it were, youths or children (*adolescentes uel puerulos*); let their affection for them be spiritual, let them keep from words of flattery, and let them love the children reverently and with the greatest circumspection. Not even on the excuse of some spiritual matter shall any monk presume to take with him a young boy alone for any private purpose but, as the Rule commands, let the children always remain under the care of their master. Nor shall the master himself be allowed to be in company with a boy without a third person as witness. . . ."³⁹ The sexual purity of the boys was a matter of great monastic concern, for they (unlike most of those entering the monastery at a mature age) could be educated as priests—and one could not touch the Sacrament with polluted hands.

With the Ganymede capital at Vézelay in mind, let us turn now to the *Filius Getronis*, written for performance in a related twelfth-century milieu—almost certainly the great Benedictine monastery of St. Benoît-sur-Loire at Fleury.⁴⁰ Al-

³⁷ On the fraternal orders' practice (and sometimes attendant scandal) in England, see F. Donald Logan, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England, c. 1240–1540*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser., 32 (Cambridge, Eng., 1996), pp. 12–15.

³⁸ "Qui cum spiritualibus filiis haec mala extrema damnatione punienda committunt" (Quinn, p. 184; see her discussion pp. 183–88).

³⁹ *Regularis concordia Anglica nationis monachorum sanctimonialiumque* / *The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*, trans. Dom Thomas Symons (London, 1953), pp. 7–8 (Latin on facing pages). Quinn, p. 156, quotes *De renuntiatione saeculi*, attributed to St. Basil (c. 330–79), warning monks against such temptations: "If thou art young in either body or mind, shun the companionship of other young men and avoid them as thou wouldst a flame. For through them the enemy has kindled the desire of many, and then handed them over to eternal fire, hurling them into the vile pit of the five cities *under pretence of spiritual love* . . ." (italics mine). On the importance of preserving the sexual purity of the boys, see de Jong, pp. 138–43; Hildemar's commentary on the rule allows for extenuating circumstances and reduced penances, so important was it to keep the boys technically, eligibly "pure" (pp. 143–44).

⁴⁰ While the evidence for Fleury is not more than circumstantial, "no other medieval abbey in central France is as good a candidate," argued by Fletcher Collins, Jr., "The Home of the Fleury *Playbook*," in *The Fleury "Playbook": Essays and Studies*, ed. Thomas P. Campbell and Clifford Davidson, Early

though the text has long been accessible in both Latin and English—since 1924 in Joseph Quincy Adams's *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas*, and since 1975 in David Bevington's widely used anthology *Medieval Drama*—it has attracted almost no critical attention.⁴¹ Since it is little known, I shall need to re-create its most telling moments in some detail.

The play dramatizes the abduction of a Christian boy, his captivity in the court of a pagan king, and the miraculous intervention by St. Nicholas that a year later returns him to his parents. In one sense at least, the action is deeply conventional. Our foremost expert on the saint, Charles W. Jones, once spoke of him wittily as "St. Nicholas, restorer of lost boys."⁴² But there is more than a commonplace miracle at the core of our play. In dramatizing the boy's captivity in a pagan court, its author allowed a kind of love otherwise censored and forbidden within the monastic milieu a moment of unusually dignified self-expression.

Although we do not know the dramatist's name, it is clear he had at hand an

Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 7 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985), p. 32. Collins effectively dismantles the claims made by Solange Corbin in 1953 on behalf of St.-Laumur de Blois as the probable home of these plays, pp. 26–34, a case further supported by Père Lin Donnat of Fleury itself, pp. 162–63. Father Donnat's essay, "Recherches sur l'influence de Fleury au Xe siècle," pp. 165–74, along with Robert-Henri Bautier, "La place de l'abbaye de Fleury-sur-Loire dans l'historiographie française du IXe au XIIe siècle," pp. 25–33, both in René Louis, ed., *Etudes ligériennes d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales* (Auxerre, 1975), explore Fleury's importance as an intellectual center. The bodily remains of St. Benedict were translated from Monte Cassino to Fleury, c. 672, where they are venerated to this day. The great monastic library—more than two thousand manuscripts—was scattered and sold off during the Wars of Religion in the sixteenth century, with many of them making their way to Rome, Leiden, Oxford, and Moscow. The Fleury Playbook, a miscellany otherwise chiefly devoted to Marian homilies, survives as MS 201 in the Municipal Library of Orléans, some twenty kilometers away, strengthening the presumption that it originated in the monastery. My analysis assumes the plays were written for Fleury or a monastic community like it; it does not depend upon a historical connection, though I, too, think the connection likely. For a view of the choir from the ambulatory, see Joan Evans, *Art in Mediaeval France, 987–1498* (Oxford, 1948), fig. 10 and p. 25; the exterior of the church and its apse can be seen in Pierre Tisné et al., eds., *Guide to the Art Treasures of France*, trans. Raymond Rudorff (New York, 1966), p. 293 (figs. 10, 11).

⁴¹ All quotations (including the English translations) are from David Bevington, ed., *Medieval Drama* (Boston, 1975), pp. 169–77, by permission of the publisher, Houghton Mifflin (note, however, that I have used roman type for all quotations from the play, reserving italics for phrases that I wish to emphasize). The play may also be studied in Joseph Quincy Adams, ed., *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas* (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), pp. 63–69, under the title *Adeodatus*. Fletcher Collins, Jr., *The Production of Medieval Church Music-Drama* (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), comments usefully on structure, characterization, costumes, and staging, pp. 232–39 and 344–45, and reproduces three visual representations of the miracle, figs. 62–64 (pp. 230–31); his *Medieval Church Music-Dramas: A Repertory of Complete Plays* (Charlottesville, Va., 1976) prints the text with music, pp. 365–95. Thomas P. Campbell, "Augustine's Concept of the Two Cities and the Fleury Playbook," in *The Fleury "Playbook,"* pp. 82–99, discovers that Augustinian theme in the contrast between Excoranda (home of Getron and his family) and Agareni (the seat of King Marmorinus), simultaneously visible as dramatic locations (see esp. pp. 93–94). Clyde W. Brockett, "Persona in *Cantilena*: St. Nicholas in Music in Medieval Drama," in *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*, ed. Clifford Davidson, *Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 8* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1986), pp. 11–29, discusses the play's use of music to establish character and theme. Scholarly attention to the play has otherwise seldom gone beyond a paragraph or two of summary description.

⁴² Charles W. Jones, *Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bari, and Manhattan: Biography of a Legend* (Chicago, 1978), p. 230.

expanded version of the *Life of St. Nicholas* written in Latin at Naples by John the Deacon somewhere around the year 880. That *Life*, based upon Greek sources, was the keystone of the cult of Nicholas in the West, and we will turn to it shortly.⁴³ But we may usefully begin with the story as told by Jacobus de Voragine in his *Golden Legend* (compiled between 1255 and 1266), the most important of all medieval collections of saints' lives. That version, too, is ultimately derived from John the Deacon's text, but it is brief enough to be quoted in its entirety:

A rich man had obtained a son through the intercession of Saint Nicholas and called him Adeodatus. He also built a chapel in his house in honor of the saint and there solemnly celebrated his feast every year. The place was close to the territory of the Agarenes, and it happened that Adeodatus was captured by the Agarenes and carried off to serve their king as a slave (*capitur et in servitatem regis eorum deputatur*). The following year, while the father was devoutly celebrating the feast of Saint Nicholas, the boy, serving the king with a precious cup (*scyphum pretiosum*) in his hands, thought of his capture, his parents' grief, and the joy that used to be theirs on the feast day, and began to sigh and weep. The king demanded the reason for his tears and said: "Your Nicholas can do as he likes, but you are going to stay right here (*quidquid tuus Nicolaus agat, tu hic nobiscum manebis*)." Suddenly a mighty wind blew up, demolished the king's palace, snatched up the boy and the cup, and carried him to the threshold of the chapel where the parents were celebrating, to the great joy of all.⁴⁴

There is nothing obviously queer about such a story, nothing queer at all. In 1970 it resurfaced in total innocence as *The Golden Cup*, a children's book by Marylou Reifsnnyder, illustrated in a charming, semi-Byzantine style.⁴⁵ But the Fleury play, if I read it correctly, while remaining suitable for even the youngest and most innocent of oblates, made room for something more. Let me begin by describing the way it was staged.

The opening instructions define the playing space in terms of three locations (*loci* or *sedes*), one to represent the court of King Marmorinus (probably on the nave edge of the north transept); another to represent the city of Excoranda, ruled

⁴³ The Latin life is reprinted in its entirety, from the fifteenth-century Mombricitus edition, by Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1933), 2:492–95. The story originated in Greece, concerning a peasant's son who is abducted and made cupbearer to the emir of Crete (*Basileos* 22 in Jones's classification, *Saint Nicholas*, pp. 75–76). It became popular in the East, found its way into the legend of other minor saints as well, and gave birth to a Latin version (*Son of Getron* 46 in Jones's classification) later joined to John the Deacon of Naples's *Life of St. Nicholas*, the chief source of the Nicholas legend for literature in the West (pp. 47, 139). Jones summarizes the play's lineage so: "Adeodatus 75 [his name for the Fleury play] is a dramatic version of *Son of Getron* 46, derived from *Basileos* 22" (p. 251). In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he writes, "Nearly every diocese now had a thriving school and every diocesan library a copy of the Latin life by John the Deacon, with Mediterranean additions like *Iconia* 34 and *Son of Getron* 46" (pp. 225–26).

⁴⁴ I quote from Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1993), 1:26–27, and from *Legenda aurea*, ed. Th. Graesse, 3rd ed. (Dresden and Leipzig, 1890), p. 29.

⁴⁵ Reifsnnyder, in the briefest of prefaces, suggests a folkloristic interpretation I have encountered nowhere else: "The story is abundant with symbolism. A gold cup often represents the sun climbing higher in the heavens, and so the return of the child with the gold cup in hand at the time of the winter solstice meant the beginning of the new year." (St. Nicholas's feast day is 6 December.)

over by Getron (probably on the nave edge of the south transept); and a third, in the eastern part of that city, to represent the Church of Saint Nicholas (probably the center of the choir and chancel of the monastery church itself).⁴⁶ The action begins with King Marmorinus seated on his high throne (“in alta sede”), surrounded by soldiers or armed attendants (“cum ministris suis armatis”) who salute his majesty and declare themselves willing to do anything he might ask. His reply is a murderous command:

Ite ergo, ne tardaveritis,	Go therefore, do not delay,
et quascunque gentes poteritis	And whatsoever peoples you can,
imperio meo subicite;	Subject them to my authority;
resistentes vobis occidite.	Kill those who resist you.

(5–8)

Marmorinus’s soldiers set off on that mission just as Getron, his wife, and son, together with a band of clerics, begin making their way to the Church of Saint Nicholas to celebrate his feast day. In the attack that follows, the Christian devotees flee in fear and confusion, leaving the boy to be carried off by the soldiers (“puerum rapientes”) and brought to the king as an especially choice battle prize:

Quod iussisti, rex bone,	What you ordered, noble king, we have done;
fecimus;	
gentes multas vobis subegimus,	We have subjugated many peoples to you,
et de rebus quas adquisivimus	And from among the spoils we acquired
hunc puerum vobis adducimus.	We lead forth this boy to you.

(9–12)

Praising his beauty (“puer iste, vultu laudabilis”), his wise understanding (“sensu prudens”), and the distinction of his birth (“genere nobilis”), the soldiers declare him worthy of serving the king (lines 13–14). Marmorinus replies to this presentation with great formality, thanking first his god Apollo and then these men for having conquered so many countries and making them pay tribute to him: “. . . vobisque gratia, / qui fecistis mihi tot patrias / subjugatas et tributarias” (lines 18–20).

But when he turns to the boy he speaks in a different tone, no longer that of a tyrant king:

Puer bone, nobis edissere	Good boy, tell us
de qua terra, de quo sis genere,	Of what land, of what people you are,
cuius ritu gens tuae patriae:	Of what religion the people of your country;
sunt gentiles, sive Christicolae?	Are they pagans or Christians?

(21–24)

The boy answers that his father worships the God “who made us *and you* and all things” (“qui fecit nos et vos et omnia”; emphasis mine), a brave answer notably lacking reference to any god named Apollo. And so this first meeting quickly evolves into a religious quarrel, though a quarrel less fiercely antagonistic than is common in much early hagiography. While the boy offers insults and provocations,

⁴⁶ I here follow Collins’s suggestions regarding the staging, *Production*, p. 239.

Deus tuus mendax et malus est;	Your god is false and evil;
stultus, caecus, surdus, et mutus	He is foolish, blind, deaf, and dumb;
est;	
talem deum non debes colere,	You ought not worship such a god,
qui non potest seipsum regere.	Who cannot govern himself, ⁴⁷

the king sustains a grave courtesy, simply warning Getron's son against such speech:

Noli, puer, talia dicere;	Do not say such things, boy;
deum meum noli despicere;	Do not look contemptuously on my god;
nam si eum iratum feceris,	For if you make him angry,
evadere nequaquam poteris.	You will be unable to escape by any
	means.

(33–40)

For a tyrant king, Marmorinus shows a notable degree of patience. (Nothing of this first interview is to be found in John the Deacon's *Vita*; it has been entirely invented by the playwright.)

The play suspends the religious argument at this point, moving its focus from the pagan court to the place representing Excoranda, where the boy's mother realizes he is lost and goes to the Church of Saint Nicholas to grieve. She does so formally and at considerable length, in the company of women ("consolatrices") whose comfort, though well intended, proves obtuse and unwelcome: trust God to restore your son, they tell her, or else to send you another one ("tibi reddet aut hunc aut alium"). When she says she would rather die than not see her only son again, they take a new course, advising her to do deeds of charity for his sake and to ask St. Nicholas for help.

She does so first by praying alone, and then with her husband, each time laying down a certain challenge (italicized in the English below):

Nicholae, pater sanctissime,	Nicholas, most holy father,
Nicholae, Deo carissime,	Nicholas, beloved of God,
si vis ut te colam diutius,	<i>If you wish me to venerate you longer,</i>
fac ut meus redeat filius!	Bring it about that my son may return!
.....
Nicholae, quem sanctum dicimus,	Nicholas, whom we call saint,
si sunt vera quae de te credimus,	<i>If those things are true which we believe</i>
	<i>of you,</i>
tua nobis et nostro filio	May your interceding with God
erga Deum prosit oratio.	Benefit us and our son.

(73–76, 113–16)

Saints were expected to prove their power.

After renouncing all food and drink until her son is returned (lines 81–82), Euphrosina goes home to set out a table with bread and wine where "the clerics

⁴⁷ The boy's association of idolatry with wanton behavior, otherwise conventional, may in this context carry a specifically homosexual implication. The god Apollo was famously the lover of two beautiful boys, Hyacinthus and Cyparissus. Their stories (along with that of Ganymede) were known in the medieval schoolroom from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 10.

and the poor may refresh themselves” (“exeat ab ecclesia, et eat in domum suam, et paret mensam, et super mensam panem et vinum, unde clerici et pauperes reficiantur,” line 116a)—a feast of charity that presumably continues in dumb show, as the play reanimates the court of the king, who is suddenly overcome with a raging hunger all his own. This parallel feast—apparently solitary, since he invites no one to join him⁴⁸—begins with the king crying out:

Dico vobis, mei carissimi,	I say to you, my dearest friends,
quod ante hanc diem non habui	That before this day I have not had
famem tantam quantam nunc habeo;	So great a hunger as now I have;
famem istam ferre non valeo.	I cannot endure such hunger.
Vos igitur quo vesci debeam	Prepare you therefore what I should eat,
praeparate, ne mortem subeam.	Lest I suffer death.
Quid tardatis? Ite velocius;	Why do you delay? Go faster;
quod manducem parate citius.	Quickly make ready something I may
	devour.

(117–24)

Unlike the ordinary hunger the clerics and the poor bring to Euphrosina’s table, the king’s need is monstrous, inexplicable, out of control. Attendants rush food to his table, which he eats voraciously as soon as he has washed his hands. (He is a king; there are traces of courtesy.) And then he calls for wine, as urgently as before:

Esurivi et modo sitio;	I was hungry, and now I am thirsty;
vinum mihi dari praecipio;	I order that wine be given me,
quod afferat mihi quam citius	Which my [servant], the son of Getron,
[servus] meus Getronis filius.	Must bring me as quickly as possible.

These lines are important also for specifying the nature of the boy’s service for the first time. He has been made cupbearer to the king, a youth in the service of someone older and more powerful who prizes him / desires him / loves him, because he is young and beautiful and noble in character. Certain possibilities, until now elided or suppressed, become more clear.

It is, of course, the story of another cupbearer, the Trojan Ganymede, that leads me to fill in the king’s feelings in this way: Ganymede, whose beauty tamed the heart of Jove in Virgil and Ovid, and whose abduction we have seen depicted in grotesque and terrifying fashion on a stone capital at Vézelay. The Fleury *Son of Getron*, discovering a similarly configured plot within a different story, presents it in reverse sequence: it must stage the abduction first, before it can allow a gentler emotion to develop. But the dialogue that follows ultimately invites a parallel interpretation.

The boy, hearing himself called to pour wine, sighs deeply and says to himself:

⁴⁸ In John the Deacon’s *Vita* the king calls upon his soldiers, magistrates, and nobles to join him, and they begin to eat together: “et omnes pariter coeperunt cibum sumere” (in Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2:494). That explains the symmetrical feasts shown on the twelfth-century Tuscan lintel carvings (see Fig. 8 and n. 123, below). The Playbook text instead requires a solitary, solipsistic feast: the king asks his friends (“mei carissimi”) to prepare the food for *him* (lines 117 ff.).

Heu, heu, heu! mihi misero!	Alas, alas, alas! Wretched me!
Vitae meae finem desidero;	I desire an end to my life;
vivus enim quamdiu fuero,	For as long as I shall live
liberari nequaquam potero.	I can by no means be freed.

(133–36)

The king, overhearing him, gently inquires into the reason for such grief (his mood underscored by the grave music to which these words are set):

Pro qua causa suspiras taliter?	For what cause do you sigh like this?
Suspirare te vidi fortiter.	I saw you sigh heavily.
Quid est pro quo sic suspiraveris?	What is it that has made you sigh thus?
Quid te nocet, aut unde quereris?	What harms you, or for what reason do you lament?

(137–40)

The boy sings not only of his own unhappiness, but of the grief it must cause his father and his people. Exactly a year ago, he says, he was “made a slave to wretchedness” (“servus factus miseriae”), “subjugated to regal power” (“potestati subiectus regiae”), and brought to this foreign place. In this exchange, too, the king notably takes no offense. He seems instead moved to sadness by these words, echoing the boy’s lament, “Heu, heu, heu! mihi misero!” with a grief of his own:

Heu, miselle, ⁴⁹ quid ita cogitas?	Alas, unfortunate one, why do you ponder thus?
Quid te juvat cordis anxietas?	What will inquietude of heart avail you?
Nemo potest te mihi tollere	No one can take you from me
quamdiu te non velim perdere.	As long as I do not wish to lose you.

(149–52)

Even allowing for a faint boast of power toward the end, this is a far cry from the way tyrants characteristically speak or exercise their will in twelfth-century drama. There is nothing of “raging Herod” here, though King Marmorinus certainly entered the play in that mode: “Go therefore, do not delay / And whatsoever peoples you can, / Subject them to my authority; / Kill those who resist you.” The speech dramatizes a change in the character of the king that began when he was first presented with the boy—a movement away from tyranny, expressed without nuance or human feeling (his very name, Marmorinus, means “stony”),⁵⁰ into a condition characterized by patience and tenderness, seeking intimacy with a cup-bearer/page.

If this reading is correct, then what is enacted here is the power of love to make

⁴⁹ “Miselle” is the diminutive of the boy’s self-chosen *miser* (“poor, wretched, unfortunate”). By echoing the word in this form—turning it into something like “unhappy little one, pitiable little one, wretched little one”—the king expresses sympathy for the boy, even within the context of his continuing captivity, as does his echoing of the boy’s “Heu” (“Alas”), even though the king sighs thus on his own behalf.

⁵⁰ Jones, *Saint Nicholas*, pp. 251–52, declares Marmorinus a stereotype of the “stony” tyrant, describing him in the banquet scene as “out-Heroding” Herod, and inventing for him unlikely comic actions—“pulling his beard in rage and throwing dishes”—while ignoring the real complexity of the role as written. More than a stony heart is expressed in his conversations with the boy.

a man more gentle, more decent, more fully human—a development that in other medieval contexts and narratives would surely be judged moral and worthy of praise. But what are we to make of such a theme—the love of a man for a boy, almost certainly an adolescent youth—written for performance in the late twelfth century within the walls of a monastic church? If we are to think about this further, we must go beyond a library of sources, conventionally defined,⁵¹ to focus on the monastery as itself a source of meaning, a performative community in which monks, novices, and oblates offer their lives to God as a continuous act of communal prayer. Monastic drama was written to be staged within a grand liturgical structure—the daily Office of the church—not because it was obligatory, but as a supplemental act staged by the monastic community *for itself* as much as for God and the saints, either at matins (generally 2:00 A.M., when the night was still dark and the secular world asleep) or at lauds (sometimes sung as an immediate sequel to matins, sometimes separately at daybreak). I want to reconstruct that context in order to shift the question a little, asking not what *The Son of Getron* “means,” but what its performance was “for.”

It is not enough to say that the play was for St. Nicholas, to honor him, and for the sake of renewing devotion to him on his feast day, perhaps especially among the youths and boys. So much can be said for any Latin play of St. Nicholas, including the three others included in the Fleury Playbook. Other purposes, more specific to each, may be presumed.⁵²

In the Fleury *Tres Clerici*, for instance,⁵³ three students traveling in a foreign land approach the house of an old man and woman to ask for lodging—having proven themselves educated, we notice, by the highly rhetorical language with which they observe the ending of the day:

Jam sol equos tenet in littore,	The sun now holds his horses upon the shore
Quos ad praesens merget sub equore;	Which presently he will plunge beneath the sea;
Nec est nota nobis hec patria:	Nor is this land known to us:
Ergo quaeri debent hospicia.	Therefore lodgings should be sought.

(5–8)

⁵¹ I allude here to the title of the conference session—“Recollecting the Library of Sources”—at which I first presented a version of this argument. It was organized by Elizabeth Fowler and Christopher Cannon for a meeting of the Medieval Academy of America held in Boston, March 1995. Larry D. Benson presided.

⁵² I gratefully second Kathleen M. Ashley’s call for critical writing that recognizes the cultural function of medieval drama, including the Latin drama of the church. “Anthropologists have defined cultural performances as occasions on which a society dramatizes its collective myths, defines itself, and reflects on its practices and values, possibly considering alternative ways of behaving and believing. . . . Typically, cultural performances belong to what Victor Turner has called a society’s ‘subjunctive mood,’ one that expresses desire and possibility, rather than simply representing what is.” To which she adds this important caveat: “To speak of the culture of medieval society is somewhat misleading, however, since any performance is the product not of the whole society but of a specific community or subculture within it.” See her “Cultural Approaches to Medieval Drama,” in *Approaches to Teaching Medieval English Drama*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson (New York, 1990), pp. 57–66; I quote from p. 57.

⁵³ For text and translation see Adams, *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas*, pp. 59–62; I quote from pp. 59–60 (there are no line numbers).

Though the old man will prove surly and inhospitable—"Hospitetur vos factor omnium!" ("Let the Maker of all be your host!")—his wife urges him to behave more generously:

Nos his dare, conjux, hospicium,	Mere charity at least, husband, compels us
Qui sic vagant querendo studium,	To give lodging to these scholars
Sola saltem compellat karitas:	Who thus wander seeking a school;
Nec est damnum, nec est utilitas.	To us it means neither loss nor profit.

Eventually the three scholars are given beds and fall asleep, but to their mortal danger. Tempted by their rich purses, the old man and his wife murder them and hide the bodies to conceal the crime. It is up to St. Nicholas, patron saint of schoolboys (as well as lost boys), to visit the house disguised as a pilgrim, uncover their bodies, and restore them to life.

This miracle, so often represented in the medieval visual arts, can be seen as a warning to innkeepers, or to any householder who might be tempted by greed into inhospitality, betrayal, even murder. It has something very particular to say to the world of commerce and self-interest. But within the monastery its lesson would surely have read differently, warning the younger monks and novices against leaving the community (by seeking transfer or refusing vows), or more generally against wandering the secular world (as *scolares vagantes*) in search of other schools and other learning. It warned them by letting the novices themselves explore the perils of such a life as part of the office of lauds, within the safety of the monastery walls. The play's lurid representation of the dangers that exist outside the cloister—threatening those "who thus wander seeking a school"—does more than honor St. Nicholas on his day; it means to persuade even the most restless and curious of the young people to remain where they are.⁵⁴

This story is included in *The Golden Legend*, as is the saint's miraculous restoration of the son of Getron; but the latter seems to have been far less known. There are few vernacular allusions to it; it is rarely represented in the visual arts; and it has no analogue version elsewhere in the drama of the medieval church—unlike the other three Nicholas plays in the Fleury Playbook, which do. Nicholas does not even appear to particular advantage within it. Not only do his devotees twice put him on notice—show your power, or we'll not worship you—he is given not a word of his own. He comes on to move the boy from one place to another, and then disappears. Out of the many Nicholas miracles available, one may wonder why this story of an abducted boy was chosen at all. What was *The Son of Getron* for?

We can surely agree, first of all, that the story as found in the *Vita* written by John the Deacon, intended for private devotional reading, would have become something quite different in performance, enacted by members of the monastic

⁵⁴ Cf. the Hildesheim play on the same subject, which begins: "Hospes care, tres sumus sotii / litterarum quos causa studii / cogit ferre penas exilii" ("Dear host, we are three friends / who for the sake of literary study / are compelled to bear the pains of exile"). Notice that it is a hunger for literary study—not for theology—that has sent them abroad. See Peter Dronke, ed., *Nine Medieval Latin Plays*, Cambridge Medieval Classics 1 (Cambridge, Eng., 1994), pp. 70–79, for text, translation, and useful introduction.

community (barely disguised) for other members of the community, in the perpetual present of liturgical time. And we can agree, as well, that the vows of stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience can never have been easy for the “fallen man” in anyone, least of all the obligation of chastity—forbidding to all but the abbot, and to certain senior monks in charge of necessary monastery business, any contact whatsoever with the feminine sex.

This aspect of the monastic vocation—enforced chastity within a community of men and youths and boys⁵⁵—has hardly figured at all in our twentieth-century attempt to recover the full richness of medieval church drama. With many of these plays, that is possibly of minor consequence. But we will cut *The Son of Getron* off at its roots if we divorce our reconstruction of what it was *for* from some vivid sense of the monastic world that invented and performed it: a world inevitably attractive to men whose desire sometimes or always tended toward love of their own sex, but even more important, a world inevitably productive of what sociologists call “situational homosexuality,” as evidenced still within prisons, boarding schools, reformatories, the armed forces, the merchant navy, the celibate priesthood. What we must allow into our reconstruction is the way *heterosexual* need and longing, in certain contexts and under certain pressures, sometimes becomes indiscriminately sexual, rechanneling itself toward the only available objects of desire: in this case other men, most often youths and boys.

That is a historically verifiable claim, not a homoerotic daydream of the past. St. Basil in the late fourth century offered this advice, relevant to monasticism of any period:

It is frequently the case with young men that even when rigorous self-restraint is exercised, the glowing complexion of youth still blooms forth and becomes a source of desire to those around them. If, therefore, anyone is youthful and physically beautiful, let him keep his attractiveness hidden until his appearance reaches a suitable state. . . .

Sit in a chair far from such a youth. . . . When he is speaking to you or singing opposite

⁵⁵ On the interaction of monks with laypeople, see Milis, *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men*, chap. 4. He writes: “In fact it was only rarely that most people had any opportunity of meeting monks. The latter represented only a tiny portion of the total population, and were, moreover, expected not to leave their abbeys. Monasticism imposed seclusion. When a monk had been sent on a journey the Rule did not allow him ‘to tell another whatever he may have seen or heard outside’ (Ch. lxvii). Moreover, monks often lived in the countryside and, except for merchants, noblemen and important Church people, journeys were not a characteristic of medieval life. Only in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries did the population of some towns have any opportunity of seeing Cistercian lay brethren conducting transactions at the marketplace” (p. 51). Cathedrals administered by monks offer an important exception. Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100–1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993), working mostly from records of the later period, usefully distinguishes between “the so-called cloister-monks (*claustrales*) [who] kept the round of services going in the abbey church, ate their meals in common, and slept in the common dormitory” and “office-holders like the cellarer and the sacrist [who] were not expected to fulfill all these obligations, or even the greater part of them, and some monks, though not burdened with administrative cares, were deemed too distinguished, or merely too old, to be held to the humdrum routine” (p. 77). She here describes the situation at Westminster in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a time when discipline was often lax. The “monk out of his cloister” was a familiar figure in antimonastic satire from the early fourteenth century on. Chaucer’s pilgrim monk in *The Canterbury Tales* is of this kind; on his literary tradition, see Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge, Eng., 1973), pp. 17–37.

you, look down as you respond to him, so that you do not by gazing at his face take the seed of desire from the enemy sower and bring forth harvests of corruption and loss. Do not be found with him either indoors or where no one can see what you do, either for studying the prophesies of Holy Scripture or for any other purpose, no matter how necessary.⁵⁶

Medieval monastic architecture directly reflects these concerns, as do monastic rules and many details in monastic customaries. The celebrated plan of St. Gall, for example—an architectural drawing more or less representative of Benedictine monastic arrangements in the age of Charlemagne—created to the southeast a special cloister for the children, carefully separated from the living space of the adult monks. Its single entrance, at the northwest corner, was accessible only from the church, the kitchen, and the bathhouse, in order to control who came and went. It was in this cloister, supervised by a group of senior monks designated *magistri puerorum* (“masters of the children”) that the *oblato* were raised. Commentaries on the rule require that three or four masters (with quarters of their own in the cloister’s south wing) be appointed for every ten boys. A third group, the *pulsantes*—so called for having “knocked” at the monastery door to profess vocation after a life spent in the secular world—also slept and took meals there, but usually for less than a year; their education and preparation for vows took place elsewhere in the monastery in the presence of adult brothers. Oblates, in contrast, were kept apart from monks not directly charged with their care, except during the hours of the Divine Office, sung jointly in the church, and on high feast days when, as a special privilege, they were allowed to dine in the monks’ refectory. The children’s quarters were separated from the work areas, too, where there was danger of encountering lay brothers of the monastery, and from the lodgings reserved for pilgrims and distinguished guests. In the plan for St. Gall, they were even kept separate from the “outer school,” where noble boys were educated in preparation for careers in the court or castle.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Quoted by Quinn, p. 173, as illustrating “the tension between individuals which constitutes the essence of inversion,” which can be based on difference in age, knowledge, and power, or “engendered by inequality in gifts such as physical beauty, intelligence, or talent at a craft.” On p. 178 she further emphasizes “the factor of age as a source of erotic tension, and, hence, passionate friendship.” The attribution of *De renunciatione saeculi* (source of the passage quoted above) to St. Basil has been queried; it may be the work of a contemporary. De Jong writes to similar effect about the earliest period: “As the lives of the Desert Fathers make eminently clear, youthful beauty was seen as a dangerous temptation, best held at arm’s length. Abbot Paphnutius refused to welcome a boy into his vicinity because his face resembled too closely that of a woman . . .” (p. 16). For provisions against same-sex desire in other early rules, including that of Pachomius (died in 346), which Jerome translated into Latin in 404, see Aaron W. Godfrey, “Rules and Regulation: Monasticism and Chastity,” in *Homo carnalis: The Carnal Aspect of Medieval Human Life*, ed. Helen Rodite Lemay, Acta 14 (Binghamton, N.Y., 1987), esp. pp. 47–48, 50–51. Godfrey offers this summary of the rule (pp. 47–48): “Monks are forbidden to dress immodestly or to ‘hitch their clothes higher than is permitted’ nor are monks allowed to ‘wash or bathe naked.’ There are further strictures about ‘washing or oiling one another,’ speaking ‘to one another in the dark’ ‘sleeping with another’ ‘or holding hands.’ . . . ‘[W]hether standing, walking or sitting one should remain about a foot from one another.’ Monks are further forbidden to ride ‘in two’s bareback on a donkey or on a wagon tongue.’”

⁵⁷ De Jong has doubted whether the “external school” was in fact as separate in its education of boys as the architectural plan apparently provides; see her pp. 237–38.

This architectural segregation was meant to discourage close friendship between monks and boys, just as the short duration of the *pulsantes'* novitiate and their absence from the children's cloister during most of each day made intimacy with members of that group unlikely. Such architecture of course served other purposes as well, not least the need to protect the spiritual life of the monks from the distraction of children—the noise of their lessons (learned by heart through oral recitation), their need for play, their occasional unruliness. The obligations of child rearing, in the period of the custom's decline, would ultimately be found too costly, difficult, and distracting.⁵⁸ But through most of the medieval centuries the Divine Office brought men and boys together in choir eight times a day,⁵⁹ with the possibility of erotic temptation always real. Monastic architecture was designed very specifically to prevent desire for the love of anyone but God.⁶⁰

These boys and youths, aged twelve to fifteen, lived under constant scrutiny by the masters of the children, who accompanied them from cloister to church and back, instructed them in groups, and slept in their dormitory for purposes of surveillance. A lamp burned there all night long, as the masters took turns keeping watch, not only to prevent sexual activity beneath the sheets or between the boys, but to protect them from illicit visitors. Any boy needing to go to the lavatory had to be accompanied by both a master and another boy; the one in need would awaken the master by means of a clapper placed next to his bed, so as to have no occasion for touching him.⁶¹ Lanfranc's eleventh-century Customs for Christ Church, Canterbury, carefully stipulates that "when [the children] begin to read let them for some time read aloud, sitting separate from one another, so that one cannot touch another with his hands or clothes. . . . Wherever the children go there should be a master between every two of them. . . . They should not put anything into anyone's hand or take anything from anyone's hand, except in the case of the abbot, the senior prior, or their own master, and that not everywhere but only in proper places, where it cannot or ought not to be otherwise. . . . Wherever they are, no one except the persons abovementioned may make signs to them, no one may smile at them. No one shall go into their school, no one shall speak

⁵⁸ See Quinn, chap. 7.

⁵⁹ Interestingly enough, defenders of the older plainsong attacked the introduction of polyphony into the Divine Office as homoerotic, since it intertwined male voices (often those of men and boys) in voluptuous fashion. See the chapter "Polyphones and Sodomites: Music and Sexual Dissidence from Leonin to Chaucer's Pardoner," in Bruce Holsinger, *Music, Body and Desire in Medieval Culture, 1150–1400*, forthcoming from Stanford University Press. Even antiphonal singing was a source of concern. Chrysostom, Basil, Paul the Deacon and Hildemar, Walafrid, and Lanfranc all speak of it as erotically charged (Quinn, p. 193 n. 73).

⁶⁰ Brilliantly reconstructed by Walter Horn and Ernest Born in *The Plan of St. Gall*, 3 vols. (Berkeley, Calif., 1979), and usefully abridged by Lorna Price, *The Plan of St. Gall in Brief* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982). I have drawn heavily on Quinn's analysis of the social and sexual logic of these arrangements, pp. 46–73. See also McLaughlin, pp. 130–31: "Plainly intended, among other things, to prevent sexual activities among the children and the development of dangerous intimacies with their elders, this rigorous watchfulness reflected, and no doubt enhanced, fears that were evidently well-founded." (See, too, her pp. 171–72 nn. 186–87.) For the proportion of masters to children, see Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 250.

⁶¹ See Quinn, p. 165, and p. 69 n. 24, for Odo of Cluny's being charged with failing to carry a lantern when escorting two oblates to the lavatory one night. He was found innocent.

to them anywhere, unless leave . . . has been given by the abbot or prior. They are never to read or do anything else in bed at midday but to cover themselves up and keep quiet. A monk of more than ordinary gravity and discretion shall be master over the other masters. . . . When they go to bed the masters shall stand by them at night with lighted candles until they are covered up.”⁶² The tenth-century *Regularis concordia*, written to govern monastic houses in England, admits a similar concern. “Not even on the excuse of some spiritual matter shall any monk presume to take with him a young boy alone for any private purpose but, as the Rule commands, let the children always remain under the care of their master. Nor shall the master himself be allowed to be in company with a boy without a third person as witness. . . .”⁶³

The boys had also to be protected from desire for each other: “When they sit in cloister or chapter, let each have his own tree-trunk for a seat, and so far apart that none touch in any way even the skirt of the other’s robe . . . let them wipe their hands as far as possible one from the other, that is, at opposite corners of the towel.”⁶⁴ They were forbidden to give the kiss of peace during the liturgy—the single form of physical contact permitted monks⁶⁵—and in a self-policing custom called *delation* were charged with reporting at daily chapter any lapses on the part of others.⁶⁶ The purpose of such rules is obvious, but they no doubt posed dangers all their own. Barriers to privacy and sight may limit intimacy, but they also create interest and allure.

Institutional concern about same-sex desire was not limited to boys alone. Chapter 22 of the Benedictine rule, “The Sleeping Arrangements of the Monks,” specifies that each must sleep in a separate bed, as assigned, but all in one place (if numbers permit), again with seniors to supervise them. “A lamp must be kept burning in the room until morning. They sleep clothed, and girded with belts or cords. . . . The younger brothers should not have their beds next to each other, but interspersed among those of the seniors. (*Adulescentiores fratres iuxta se non habeant lectos, sed permixti cum senioribus.*)”⁶⁷ As early monastic penitential handbooks likewise make clear, the possibility of same-sex desire was acknowl-

⁶² Lanfranc, quoted and summarized by Quinn, pp. 124–27. G. G. Coulton, *Life in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. in 4 vols. (Cambridge, Eng., 1928; repr. in 2 vols., 1967), translates a number of monastic documents dealing with the rearing of oblates (2 [part 4], pp. 98–103), including, on pp. 110–11, Peter the Venerable’s account of a scandal at the monastery of Tournus, concealed until devils boast to a lay brother in a vision that they have “made the master of the school to fornicate with one of his boys.” Abbot Hugh investigates the matter and finds that “these ministers of lies had told the truth.”

⁶³ *Regularis concordia*, trans. Symons, p. 8.

⁶⁴ From the custumal of St.-Bénigne at Dijon, quoted by Coulton, *Life in the Middle Ages*, 2 (part 4), p. 100.

⁶⁵ Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 306. He writes: “The most poignant aspect of their lives was the concerted effort of monastic authorities to prevent any expression of affection or warmth toward them by the older monks, or even among themselves. This was, in a way, inevitable in communities of celibates in a society increasingly troubled about homosexuality, but it nevertheless suggests an emotional life of pitiable aridity.”

⁶⁶ On *delation*, see Quinn, pp. 117–18.

⁶⁷ *The Rule of St. Benedict*, pp. 66–67.

edged as always real, to be prevented as much as possible, and to be punished severely whenever design and discipline failed.⁶⁸

The monastic milieu in which *The Son of Getron* originated may thus be seen as an early form of what Aaron Betsky calls “queer space,”⁶⁹ in at least two senses of the word. First of all, the monastery quite deliberately sought to be “unusual, singular, and strange,” since the marking of a maximum difference from the world was essential to its self-image and its highest goals. But it was also “queer” in its creation of a single-sex society in which monks and boys needed to love and care for one another in the shadow of their love and need for God.

Thus the erotic choice presented in a monastery was not between what we call heterosexuality and homosexuality, but between maintaining and not maintaining chastity, between spiritual and carnal love. As Patricia Quinn says, in *Better Than the Sons of Kings*, “In an exclusively male society ‘homosexuality’ loses the impact that it carries in ones where both males and females are available as potential sexual partners” (p. 157). Cenobitic monasticism—monasticism within community—was founded upon emotions it both valorized and feared.

Heterosexual desire must also be presumed, with sexual fantasies concerning women or young girls no doubt haunting many of those who entered the monastery in their late adolescence or as adults.⁷⁰ That desire, too, was made the object of institutional discipline and control, and warned against in monastic art. A twelfth-century capital from the Cathedral of Saint-Etienne in Toulouse that shows Herod gazing on a young and beautiful Salome, tilting her chin in his hand (Fig. 5), has recently been studied by Linda Seidel in just such terms.⁷¹ But that carving,

⁶⁸ See Quinn, pp. 160–61, on the Penitential of Cummean (c. 650); she notes that in this penitential two-thirds of the specified “misdemeanors of boys” are sexual in nature and concludes that “little differentiated sexual experimentation by early medieval boys from that of modern boys.” A discussion of other penitentials follows (through p. 164).

⁶⁹ Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same Sex Desire* (New York, 1997).

⁷⁰ Milis, *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men*, p. 69, reproduces a miniature from a life of St. Benedict, made in Liège, 1432, that shows Benedict in his cell tempted by a vision of seven naked girls dancing in a ring. A capital at Vézelay shows the devil presenting a woman to St. Benedict, who raises one hand to refuse the temptation, while holding a book upright in his lap with the other; see Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century*, ed. Harry Bober, trans. Marthiel Mathews, Bollingen Series 90/1 (Princeton, N.J., 1978), p. 238 (fig. 186).

⁷¹ Figure 5: studied by Linda Seidel, “Medieval Cloister Carving and Monastic Mentalité,” in *The Medieval Monastery*, ed. Andrew MacLeish, *Medieval Studies at Minnesota* 2 (St. Cloud, Minn., 1988), pp. 1–16. Seidel writes, “In the most unforgettable scene on the capital . . . Salome appeals to our visual senses to become engaged in her activity, to contemplate her as Herod is so acutely doing. Indeed looking is the major activity of this scene and the image seems to instruct the viewer to do the same. . . . The pleasure that Herod takes in admiring the alluring maiden is ‘objectively’ understandable,” implying that “relations between a man and a woman were not strange to the thoughts of the clerics of the cathedral.” The sculpture, “a lesson on the risks of sexual arousal . . . , acknowledges physical desire, fleeting—even forgotten—pleasure, by presenting it so tangibly. . . . The sculpture stimulates reflection on encounters of this kind in the service of a higher good” (pp. 6–8). For the other sides of the capital, which depict the outcome of Herod’s lust, see figs. 8, 9. Seidel calls attention to the proscription on heterosexual activity by monks and canons legislated in two Lateran councils held in the 1120s—the same decade in which the capital was made (p. 14 n. 27). Within monastic houses such as Vézelay or Fleury the more urgent concern, not surprisingly, had to do with same-sex desire. What Seidel argues for the plastic arts, I would extend to monastic plays like the *Filius Getronis*: “Sculptures . . . must be understood in the context of their location, for they both impose on and receive from their environment particular associations” (p. 11).



Fig. 5. Herod tempted by Salome.
Capital (formerly in the cloister), Toulouse, Cathedral of Saint-Etienne.

we should note, was made for cathedral clergy—for Augustinian canons regular ministering in and to the world—rather than for the monks and boys of a monastery. Temptation of this other kind—real girls, real women—presented itself to cathedral clergy daily. And so this capital, originally placed in the private space of their cloister, shows on its other sides the consequence of Herod's lust for his beautiful stepdaughter: the murder of St. John the Baptist and the presentation of his head on a platter at a luxurious banquet. Its warning is pointed and clear.

For cloistered monks the terms of temptation were different. Immured behind walls that few could leave, and then only on special business with special permission, they would have had little or no contact with real women, nor would their erotic fantasies have been much fed by the proximity thereof. Such fantasy, when not successfully repressed, is likely instead to have focused upon the only attractive persons in view, persons of their own sex, generally (but not necessarily) younger. The structure of medieval monasticism made that almost inevitable,⁷² even against its will. If we read *The Son of Getron* as a cultural performance, avoiding false decorum in our reconstruction of the past, we may find that it is about something other, and more complex, than first appears.

There is, of course, no absolute necessity that we do so. The play offers an exciting “melodrama of escape from danger” linked to a “pious element of thanksgiving,” as David Bevington describes it in his introduction to the play,⁷³ and can be valued simply in those terms. The subtext I seek to uncover is not only veiled, in the manner of concealed symbolism, but sanitized and separated from any discourse of physical desire. The play, at most, dramatizes erotic longing rather than erotic deeds: there is not the slightest reference to sex in it. But such longing was deemed sinful in its own right, and could readily stand in for (because it could readily lead to) desire turned into deed. In fact, the martyrdom of St. Pelagius—a closely parallel story in which a beautiful Christian youth is killed for refusing the lecherous advances of his captor, a Saracen ruler—focuses directly upon sexual danger and violence. (See the Appendix below for an account of his legend and the version in Latin verse written by the nun Hrotswitha, c. 962, based, she tells us, on an eyewitness report.) The sexual implications of our play are “covered” but real, as they are in the Vézelay capital already examined, and on many diverse pages of the twelfth-century Latin literature of love. There, too, the configurations of the Ganymede myth—the *raptus* (or carrying off) of a beautiful youth, to make

⁷² Constance H. Berman, “Men's Houses, Women's Houses: The Relationship between the Sexes in Twelfth-Century Monasticism,” in *The Medieval Monastery*, ed. MacLeish, pp. 43–52, demonstrates that women were not a negligible factor in the reform movements, Cistercian and Premonstratensian, of the eleventh and twelfth century. But that relationship was at an institutional level, resulting in the development of double houses, where the needs of female communities for priests or canons to provide for their spiritual and sacramental lives could be met. In every way except for the cure of souls, however—and that was entrusted to only the most senior and blameless clergy—the sexes were strictly segregated. Jo Ann McNamara, “The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050–1150,” in *Medieval Masculinities* (above, n. 1), pp. 12–13, suggests that in a variety of ways the “mixed, chaste life-style of the apostolic past” became more important than modern historians generally allow. But she, too, stresses the chastity of those relationships. The monastic dedication is not just to celibacy, but to chastity defined by an (ideally) total separation from the female sex.

⁷³ Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, p. 169.

him cupbearer and more—provided a way of talking about same-sex desire, long before “homosexuality” as a gender identity could be wholly conceived or thought about outside a discourse of sin and damnation.

In the *Filius Getronis* the tenderness and longing expressed by the older, more powerful partner toward someone younger and more vulnerable are emotionally compelling—and have an elegiac sadness about them expressive of a contradiction at the heart of monastic culture itself. For cenobitic (communal) monasticism—the Middle Ages’ highest ideal of the religious life—almost against its will created the most fertile field imaginable in which same-sex desire might grow, while proscribing and punishing its physical expression. Unlike the demands made upon St. Pelagius (again, see the Appendix, too lengthy to incorporate here), the speeches from the king to the boy contain no sexual overture, no sexual innuendo; but I detect in them what Judith Butler in a different context has called “systemic melancholia”—melancholy that has less to do with the loss of a particular object of desire than with the loss attendant on proscribed desire itself.⁷⁴ It can be heard in the otherwise chaste words of the king: “For what cause do you sigh like this? / I saw you sigh heavily. . . . No one can take you from me / As long as I do not wish to lose you” (lines 137–38, 151–52).

There is nothing in the legend that makes such tenderness obligatory. In *La vie de Saint Nicolas*, written by the Norman poet Wace, c. 1150, and based on the same *Vita* written in the late ninth century by John the Deacon, the pagan emperor purchases the boy from thieves and loves him because he is beautiful and well born (“mult l’amat / Pur ceu ke beus e gens esteit”). But when the boy tells him he misses his family and home, the emperor, in this account, strikes him in anger and forbids him ever to weep in his presence again.⁷⁵ No kindness, affection, or sympathy is imagined in this case.

The Fleury play has something else in mind, dramatizing the king’s love for his cupbearer at length and with a certain dignity, until the king’s claim to possess the boy—“No one can take you from me / As long as I do not wish to lose you”—is rebuked by a swift and stunning action:

Interea veniat aliquis in similitudine Nicholai; puerum, scyphum cum recentario tenentem, ap[p]rehendat, ap[p]rehensumque ante fores componat, et quasi non compertus, recedat. (Line 152a)

(Meanwhile let someone come in the likeness of Nicholas; let him take hold of the boy who is clutching the cup of wine, and, having seized him, let him restore him to his proper place before the doors [of his home], and, as if not detected, let him withdraw.)

⁷⁴ Discussed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*,” *GLQ* 1 (1993), 1–16, with a reply by Judith Butler in the same issue (pp. 17–32). D. A. Miller, *Bringing out Roland Barthes* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), p. 7, uses the phrase “erotic pessimism” to characterize a similar mid-twentieth-century despair, born of repressed or closeted homosexuality.

⁷⁵ “Li emperere le ferit, / Par maltalent lui defendit / Qu’il mes devant lui ne plorast / Ne que sa gent ne regretast.” See Einar Ronsjö, ed., “*La vie de Saint Nicolas*” par Wace: *Poème religieux du XIIe siècle*, *Etudes Romanes de Lund* 5 (Lund, 1942), p. 154 (lines 1045–48), and for the previous quotation, p. 153 (lines 1018–19).

It would be hard to imagine a simpler or more dramatic solution. The boy is recognized and brought to his father; the mother runs to embrace him, giving thanks to St. Nicholas for his intercession; and the whole choir sings the anthem appointed for lauds on his feast day, “Copiosae caritatis” (“Of abundant love”). In this manner the play comes to its end, seamlessly rejoining the liturgy from which it arose—a liturgy of immense sweep and power, prophylactic to any theme of transgression broached within it. But in fact the play has already resolved that danger in its own terms, by recapitulating its beginning in markedly different terms. It has staged another rape, so to speak, this time with the boy carried off by a saint on behalf of a devout family, rather than by soldiers on behalf of a tyrant king. The *Legenda aurea*, having no interest in a parallel capture, reports the boy as carried back “by a wind.”

A painting by a follower of Giotto in the Basilica of Saint Francis at Assisi (Fig. 6) made a quarter-century later than our play⁷⁶ presents the miraculous conclusion in two scenes. In the first, the saint swoops down (like a great bird from above) to seize the boy as he serves wine to the king. The king feasts alone, his ministers off to the side. In the second scene, the saint restores the boy to his family, at table with others, dining in charity. In this painting, as in our play, the boy is as helpless in the hands of St. Nicholas as he had been in the hands of Marmorinus’s armed soldiers. This second *raptus*—a word that means both “rape” and “carrying off”⁷⁷—rebukes not only the tyrant pride of the king but even what I read as his tender love for the boy, affirming the transcendent value of monastic chastity in the words of the anthem with which the play concludes:

Condescende, supplicamus, ad te suspirantibus,
Ut exutos gravi carne pertrahas ad superos.

(174–75)

“Come down,” the full choir beseeches Nicholas, “to *those who sigh longingly* to you, / That you may *lead on high* those who have been *divested of the burdensome flesh*” (emphasis mine). “St. Nicholas,” sing the monks, “take us away too.” Again

⁷⁶ Figure 6: from a cycle of St. Nicholas paintings made for the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament at Assisi, before 1321. It illustrates the *Vita* of John the Deacon: “Subito uir Dei, Nicolaus, affuit et apprehendit infantem per uerticem capilli capitis sui et reportauit et reddidit illum matri suæ” (in Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2:495). On the Assisi paintings in general, see Edward G. Clare, *St. Nicholas: His Legends and Iconography*, Pocket Library of “Studies” in Art 25 (Florence, 1985), pp. 60–66; he reproduces this example as fig. 16. For other illustrations of the story (showing the boy’s restoration only), see figs. 10 (bottom register, second from left) and 12 (left column, second from top).

⁷⁷ Before the twelfth century, the crime of rape consisted less in sexual ravishment, which in some cases was not even involved, than in stealing a woman away from her parents, guardian, or husband. Not until Gratian’s *Decretum* (c. 1150) was “rape” definitively characterized as unlawful coitus—though even then a sense of property infringement remained strong. “It was not a public crime but a wrong against the individual who had the legal power over the woman”: Vern Bullough, “Sexology and the Medievalist,” in *Homo carnalis*, p. 36. Henry Ansgar Kelly in two substantial essays has stressed the fact that male wards and heirs could also be “ravished” (abducted), often by the mother of the boy in question. See his “Statutes of Rapes and Alleged Ravishers of Wives: A Context for the Charges against Thomas Malory, Knight,” *Viator* 28 (1997), 361–419; and “Meanings and Uses of *Raptus* in Chaucer’s Time,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998; forthcoming).



Fig. 6. Adeodatus as cupbearer to the king (above) and restored to his family by St. Nicholas (below).
Fresco (School of Giotto), Assisi, Basilica of Saint Francis, Lower Church, Chapel of the Holy Sacrament.

Judith Butler's concept of "systemic melancholia" can reveal something at the very heart of monastic life: its most urgent desire is to escape this realm of proscribed desire.

The cultural work performed by this play is thus far more complex than anything imagined by those who in the eighth or ninth century first invented the legend it dramatizes. It had, after all, a different culture to serve.⁷⁸ Before the rise of universities in the thirteenth century, monastic schools constituted the greatest centers of learning in Europe, with twelfth-century Fleury ranking among the most distinguished. Somewhere about the year 1100 Raoul Tortaire is recorded as teaching versification to novices there, as well as composing verse lives of St. Benedict and St. Maur.⁷⁹ If that tradition lived on, as is likely, it may account for the overall literary distinction of the Fleury Playbook, as well as for the fact that its St. Nicholas plays are entirely versified—suggesting that those four plays were written for students in the school, perhaps even by them. (The plays based on Scripture include, and give highest honor to, biblical prose.) The older boys would have known the Ganymede myth from both Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and are likely to have taken a certain humanistic pride in doing so. Ralph Hexter's study of Ovid in the medieval schoolroom reveals a surprisingly literal appreciation for Ovidian eroticism and even obscenity in the *Heroides* and the *Ars amatoria*;⁸⁰ and moralizations of Ovid read our story in divergent ways, the *Ovide moralisé* as an example of unnatural love, the *Ovidius moralizatus* as a Christian allegory in which the eagle is identified with the symbolic eagle of St. John, and the abduction with spiritual transport and intimacy with God. (The latter reading is clearly not relevant to our play.)⁸¹ Like the Vézelay capital, the

⁷⁸ In the Latin *Vita* the boy's exceptional beauty is noted in advance of his abduction, as further indicating the miracle of his conception—"Erat enim infans clarissimus et speciosus ualde"—whereas in the play it is first mentioned as a reason for presenting him to the pagan king. The *Vita*, too, provides the king a sympathetic "O miselli," but is otherwise without tenderness in the climactic scene: "O miselli, quid uobis prodest ista cogitare cum ego uos apud me habeo? Et quis est qui de manu mea uos tollere possit, quandiu deus noster uult facere ut uos habere debeamus? Fer mihi bibere" (Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2:493, 495). "Poor boy, what good does it do you to think about such things when I have you near me? And who could take you from my possession as long as our god wishes it to be that we are bound to possess you? Bring me something to drink." Here, instead of the king declaring "I do not wish to lose you," the pagan god is said to underwrite the boy's captivity and service. (Note the language of feudal obligation in the second part—"manu mea," "debeamus"—and the possible sexual implication of "habere.")

⁷⁹ Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2:311. See Réginald Grégoire, Léo Moulin, and Raymond Oursel, *The Monastic Realm*, trans. Donald Mills (New York, 1985), pp. 176, 193–99, on monastic schools; pp. 195–96 touch on the great master Abbo (d. 1004), who also taught at Fleury.

⁸⁰ Ralph J. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's "Ars amatoria," "Epistulae ex Ponto," and "Epistulae heroidum"* (Munich, 1986).

⁸¹ Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance*, p. 42, compares these two influential fourteenth-century texts to reveal the continuity of both traditions. The former preserves the eroticism in verses Saslow translates so:

Jupiter saw him, young and fair,
And abducted him from Tros, his father;
Carried him off to his realm
And enjoyed himself with him

Fleury play seems intended to warn monks and boys against the only kind of sexual desire genuinely threatening *within* the monastery walls: desire for someone of their own sex, within or across generations.

But that warning is only part of what makes this play relevant to the project of recovering gay history. It will be clear by now that the text displays a divided consciousness: orthodox and censorious on the one hand; sophisticated and tolerant on the other (if only in part, and if only for a while). To understand it more fully, we must set it within the twelfth-century flowering of homoerotic poetry and culture that John Boswell studied in a chapter entitled "The Triumph of Ganymede: Gay Literature of the High Middle Ages."⁸² As Thomas Stehling's anthology *Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship*⁸³ also demonstrates, one of the ways in which it was possible to talk freely of the love between men and boys in the world of the medieval monastery, abbey, or cathedral was in the language of mythology. That some *did* talk of that love there, as part of an educated elite, cannot be doubted—the poems survive—whether they did so in terms of Orpheus's love for tender Thracian boys (scorning the love of women after the loss of Eurydice), or Apollo's love for the beautiful Hyacinthus and the handsome Cyparissus, or Jupiter's love for Ganymede. All four stories are sympathetically narrated, one after the other, by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* 10.79–219. Within the high ecclesiastical culture of the Middle Ages, Jupiter's cupbearer became so commonplace a code word for homosexuality that a prelate could be ridiculed as *ganimedior Ganymede*—"gayer than Ganymede"/more Ganymede than Ganymede.⁸⁴ As Leonard Barkan shrewdly observed in his study of Michelangelo, "if this is an act that cannot be named, it must inspire figuration."⁸⁵

Other evidence, too, is at hand. Love poems to medieval women, Stehling noticed, are almost always in the vernacular and devoid of scholarly learning, whereas love poems to boys are regularly in Latin and richly adorned with classical allusions—suggesting their origin in male religious communities, where women were almost totally unknown, and boys, though kept distant, were nevertheless regularly in view.⁸⁶ In the Fleury play, the first interview between the king and the

Many times, voluptuously,
Against law and against nature.

The latter uses as a proof text "Suffer the little children to come unto me" (Matt. 19.14) and may well be a reactive formation, meant to counter the dominant (sodomitical) understanding of the story.

⁸² Boswell, *Christianity*, chap. 9, and elsewhere, including appendix 2. Boswell's larger claim, that the church in general until the thirteenth century did not oppose same-sex desire, has been generally thought too sweeping. But the flowering of poetry about male love in the twelfth century, within educated, clerical circles, is well supported by evidence.

⁸³ This anthology (New York, 1984) is an important resource, as are the many pages drawn from the Middle Ages in James J. Wilhelm, ed., *Gay and Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology from Sappho to Michelangelo* (New York, 1995), pp. 135–92.

⁸⁴ "Qui sedet hac sede ganimedior est Ganymede" ("He who sits in this seat is [gayer] than Ganymede"). Quoted by F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Oxford, 1957), 2:289 n. 5.

⁸⁵ Barkan, *Transuming Passion*, p. 54.

⁸⁶ Thomas Stehling, "To Love a Medieval Boy," *Journal of Homosexuality* 8 (1983), 151–70 (see p. 167).

boy can be seen as transforming a commonplace of homoerotic poetry into a hagiographic theme, translating the traditional resistance of the desired boy into a truculent refusal to honor the god of the pagan king.⁸⁷ “Your god is false and evil; / He is foolish, blind, deaf, and dumb; / You ought not worship such a god, / Who cannot govern himself” (lines 33–36). As so often in the poems of Marbod of Rennes and Baudri of Bourgueil, the lovable boy refuses to be loving.⁸⁸

Within the monastery, of course, erotic friendships had always been officially forbidden—and with increasing severity as the twelfth century came to its close. But within that century, as John Boswell has argued, certain clerical and ecclesiastical circles seem to have been relatively tolerant of same-sex desire, at least within their own elite group. This sophisticated tolerance can be discovered, for instance, in those several poems in which Ganymede and Venus (or their advocates) wittily debate which love is best, the love of women or of boys—a debate Ganymede does not always lose.⁸⁹ It is further attested in paired images from a magnificent *Bible moralisée* (c. 1215–30; Fig. 7) that show bishops first embracing young boys and then rejecting them in revulsion at their sin. They offer a pictorial gloss on 1 Kings 6.5, whose literal text is said to signify “the wicked prelates and the wicked bishops who hold rents and prebends through purchase and through simony, and God is angered with them and they are struck by sodomy which eats them and their loins and their entrails.” The literal text itself is illustrated at top left by Old Testament Philistines transformed into Saracens, with biblical mice, transformed into rats, gnawing at their genitals. In the vignette below, illustrating the text’s moralization, wanton boys slip their hands under the robes of bishops and prelates. The paired images on the right illustrate repentance, in reward for which (in the moralized text, illustrated below) “Jesus Christ delivers them and removes them from sodomy and they push the boys away and put them beneath them.”⁹⁰ In these images the “sophistication” and “tolerance” Boswell postulated as characteristic of a certain ecclesiastical elite are subtly acknowledged, if only to be condemned.

A very different view is set forth in the monastic theology of Aelred of Rievaulx, who died in 1167, leaving behind at his death, according to his fellow

⁸⁷ There is an interesting anomaly even here, since Marmorinus does not demand that the boy worship his god, only that he not insult him: “Do not say such things, boy; / Do not look contemptuously on my god; / For if you make him angry, / You will be unable to escape by any means” (lines 37–40).

⁸⁸ Stehling, “To Love a Medieval Boy,” p. 160. On these poets in their Ovidian context, see Gerald A. Bond, *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia, 1995), chaps. 2 and 3.

⁸⁹ In the satirical twelfth-century debate between Ganymede and Helen, however, Apollo in the final verses “comes to his senses,” Jupiter declares himself “aflame” for his Juno, and Ganymede asks for Helen’s hand in marriage—but only after this improbable couple has offered an outrageous account of each other’s sexual parts and practices. It can be read in Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 381–89.

⁹⁰ Figure 7: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 2554, fol. 36r. For a color facsimile of this manuscript see *Bible moralisée*, ed. Gerald B. Guest, *Manuscripts in Miniature 2* (London, 1995); I quote from Guest’s translation of the text, pp. 108–9. Albert the Great likewise opined that the stink of “this wicked vice” may well be said to rise since “it is found to reign more in high persons than in the humble” (“infandum istud vitium plus in altis personis, quam in humilibus invenitur regnare”; quoted by Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 134).



Fig. 7. Bishops and clergy embracing boys (bottom left) and rejecting boys (bottom right). Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Vindobonensis 2554, *Bible moralisée*, fol. 36r.

monk and biographer, Walter Daniel, a community of some 140 monks plus 500 *conversi* (lay brothers and monks admitted too late to qualify for orders).⁹¹ This gentle and much loved abbot declared “spiritual friendship,” in a treatise by that name (*De spirituali amicitia*), essential to the life of the monastery. It was not, he said, the opposite of carnal affection, but its refinement and perfection, an essential first step “toward the love and knowledge of God.”⁹² In another treatise, *Jesus at the Age of Twelve*, written for his friend Yvo, a fellow monk, c. 1153–57, Aelred’s meditation on “the historical sense” of Jesus’ being found among the doctors of the Law makes affective room for the boy’s beauty and sweetness of person: “how great was their happiness to whom it was given to see his face for so many days and to hear his words, sweet as honey; to contemplate in a human being, in a boy, certain signs of heavenly powers shining forth. . . . For I think that the grace of heaven shone from that most beautiful face with such

⁹¹ These numbers are furnished by Walter Daniel, *Life of Ailred*, trans. F. M. Powicke (London, 1950), chap. 30 (pp. 118–19); in the fashion of saintly biography, they may be slightly exaggerated.

⁹² *Spiritual Friendship* is cast in the form of a dialogue between Aelred and several young monks seeking instruction on the place of friendship within the monastery. For relevant passages, see, for example, p. 73, where they are joined by “our friend Gratian, and quite opportunely. I might rightly call him friendship’s child for he spends all his energy in seeking to be loved and to love.” Or, pp. 74–75, on Christ’s love as the pattern: “And thus, friend cleaving to friend in the spirit of Christ, is made with Christ but one heart and one soul, and so mounting aloft through degrees of love to friendship with Christ, he is made one spirit with him in one kiss. Aspiring to this kiss the saintly soul cries out: ‘Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.’” Three kinds of kisses are defined (corporeal, spiritual, intellectual), with the “carnal kiss” said to be, in most circumstances, an abuse and misuse of something ultimately spiritual (pp. 75–77). But carnal friendship in youth, “if nothing dishonorable enters into it, is to be tolerated in the hope of a more abundant grace, as the beginnings, so to say, of a holier friendship” (pp. 113–14). And so on. I quote from the translation by Mary Eugenia Laker, SSND, Cistercian Fathers Series 5 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1977), to which Douglass Roby contributes an excellent introduction. St. Anselm in the eleventh century, St. Bernard and William of St. Thierry in the twelfth, along with Peter of Blois in the thirteenth, all made distinctive contributions to a monastic theology of love (pp. 36–39). On St. Bernard, see Leclercq, *Monks and Love*, pp. 16–26 and chap. 5, and more generally, Quinn, pp. 182–83. It was an important new emphasis. As Milis writes, in *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men*, p. 138, the life of the monk, traditionally conceived, “is egocentric in the sense that he is not expected to care about the spiritual fulfillment of his ‘neighbour,’” although he must not be selfish or uncharitable. “He has only to care about his own salvation and perhaps about that of those for whom he is held responsible by a decision of his superior.” But living “in common” imposed temptations and necessities all its own; and oblates and youthful novices certainly fell within the category of those needing nurturing care, even for Benedictines. In Quinn’s view, “the closest bonds in the oblates’ lives, those of love, are glimpsed in the poetry, penitentials, and customary literature of the Benedictines” (p. xvi), a fact richly demonstrated in her book. Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250*, Cistercian Studies Series 95 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1988), focuses his study on the problem of “how to reconcile a religion that commands us to love both God and all persons with our proclivity as individuals to seek out other persons for special loves of different kinds” (p. xlii); his book brilliantly historicizes the monastic solution; see chap. 7, “Aelred of Rievaulx and the Limits of Friendship.” Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform, 1098–1180* (Stanford, Calif., 1996), writes with insight about monastic ways of transforming sexual desire into Christian *caritas*; see esp. pp. 8–9, 82–89, 293 n. 101. For a woman’s history relevant here, cf. Hildegard of Bingen’s love for the independent-minded young nun Richardis, well described by Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (d. 203) to Marguerite Porete (d. 1310)* (Cambridge, Eng., 1984), pp. 151, 154–59. Elements of the maternal, the erotic, and the spiritual all figured profoundly in that relationship.

charm as to make everyone look at it, listen to him and be moved to affection. . . . Old men kiss him, young men embrace him, boys wait upon him,” while the holy women “complain when he lingers a little longer with his father and his companions. Each of them, I think, declares in his inmost heart: ‘Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.’”⁹³ Like many apologists before and after, Aelred found precedent in the love of David and Jonathan—“the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul”—whose Old Testament narrative ends in a great dirge, David mourning Jonathan as “exceedingly beautiful, and amiable to me above the love of women.”⁹⁴ Aelred found a more profound authorization still in Christ’s special relationship with St. John, the youngest of the disciples, who refers to himself in his Gospel, over and over, as (somehow uniquely) “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”⁹⁵ In the *Mirror of Charity*, written for St. Bernard, Aelred refers to the love of Christ and John as a “heavenly marriage”—“for [at the Last Supper] he allowed one, not all, to recline on his breast as a sign of his special love.” In all this, Aelred articulated with special eloquence something St. Augustine and St. Basil had

⁹³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Treatises: The Pastoral Prayer*, Cistercian Fathers Series 2 (Spencer, Mass., 1971), p. 9.

⁹⁴ The story of Jonathan and David is found in 1 Kings 18 ff. and 2 Kings 1; I quote from the latter, v. 26, in which David also calls him “my brother” and concludes, “As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee.” Aelred writes of them in *Spiritual Friendship*, pp. 85, 115–17, including Saul’s reproaches to Jonathan, his son: “You son of a woman that is the ravisher of a man, I know that you love him to your own confusion and to the confusion of your shameless mother!” (1 Kings 20.30). Though both David and Jonathan were generally understood to be young men, the great Parisian painter Honoré, illustrating a sumptuous manuscript of *Le Somme le Roy*, c. 1295, chose to show their love as intergenerational. That choice utterly perplexed the very learned Eric G. Millar, introducing the pictures in a color facsimile in 1959: “David and Jonathan embrace one another, typifying friendship, Jonathan being represented as an elderly bearded man for some reason. Their names are written in black in the lower margin.” Honoré’s choice may seem less puzzling now. See Millar, *The Parisian Miniaturist Honoré* (London, 1959), p. 28 and pl. 7. Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 252 n. 35, furnishes other references; and Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, chap. 4, studies the relationship in a chapter called “Heroes and Their Pals.”

⁹⁵ On this relationship, see, e.g., John 13.23, 19.26, 20.2, 21.7, 20–24; and for the passage from the *Mirror of Charity* (3.39.110), Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 225–26. Boswell’s fig. 13 shows the two seated tenderly together, in a tradition especially popular in fourteenth-century Germany, though examples survive from England and France as well. See Eleanor S. Greenhill, “The Group of Christ and St. John as Author Portrait: Literary Sources, Pictorial Parallels,” in *Bernhard Bischoff: Festschrift zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Johanne Autenrieth and Franz Brunhölzl (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 406–16 with plates; and John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York, 1994), figs. 17–19. A drawing accompanying the prayers of St. Anselm, made in or near Salzburg c. 1160, furnishes our oldest known example (p. 408), no surprise granted St. Anselm’s theology of monastic friendship. Asleep on Christ’s breast at the Last Supper, John was said to have been shown there in a vision (or to have drunk from Christ’s breast) the prophetic secrets he would later record in the Apocalypse. But the images under discussion developed independently of the Last Supper, separating Christ and John from the other apostles, in order to make theirs a “special” relationship. A long tradition described John as a prospective bridegroom called from his nuptials to follow Christ. The Venerable Bede identified him with the bridegroom at Cana (John 2) and the Pseudo-Bonaventura, in his immensely popular *Meditationes vitae Christi*, imagined Christ saying to him: “Leave this wife and follow me for I shall lead you to a higher wedding” (Greenhill, pp. 408–10). St. John’s Gospel is generally agreed to be the most “spiritual” of the four.

recognized long before: that spiritual love, lacking any carnal component, may nevertheless exhibit the appearance of desire.⁹⁶

I do not mean by this to suggest that Aelred was unchaste or in any modern sense “homosexual,” only that the emotions he valorizes in *Spiritual Friendship* are part of the history of love between men, and must not be passed over in reconstructing the full range of the medieval monastic experience. Walter Daniel records that in Aelred’s long last illness, twenty to thirty monks would visit him in his special cell every day, seeking spiritual conversation: “There was nobody to say to them, ‘Get out, go away, do not touch the Abbot’s bed’; *they walked and lay about his bed and talked with him as a little child prattles with its mother*. He would say to them, ‘My sons, say what you will; only let no vile word, no de-traction of a brother, no blasphemy against God proceed out of your mouth.’ *He did not treat them with the pedantic imbecility habitual in some silly abbots who, if a monk takes a brother’s hand in his own, or says anything that they do not like, demand his cowl, strip and expel him. Not so Aelred, not so*” (italics mine).⁹⁷

The moral climate of the thirteenth century would be very different, even within sophisticated clerical and ecclesiastical circles. This, too, John Boswell has carefully demonstrated. What R. I. Moore has called “the formation of a persecuting society” had been by 1250 almost wholly achieved, a Christian community constructed upon hatred of difference and fear of deviancy—to the appalling cost of Jews, Saracens, heretics, sodomites, lepers, prostitutes, and other marginalized groups.⁹⁸ But let us also note that from within the final years of the twelfth century *The Son of Getron* dared still to exhibit a more generous sympathy, dared still to give dignified voice (if only for a few verses) to Jupiter as well as Ganymede. It allowed the younger a credible resistance and sadness while permitting the older a deepening of his humanity in the experience of such love.

A divided consciousness of the sort I postulate here is neither anachronistic nor implausible, as the literary production of one Hilary of Orléans can make clear. Known (incorrectly) to all but the most recent scholarship as Hilary the Englishman (Hilarius Anglicus),⁹⁹ this self-identified pupil of Abelard wrote three highly

⁹⁶ I here paraphrase Quinn, p. 159. Olsen, “St. Anselm and Homosexuality,” carefully examines the evidence concerning that other great theologian of spiritual love—a Benedictine, be it noted, not a Cistercian—who frequently employed the language of passionate friendship in his letters to other monks. Olsen largely defends St. Anselm against imputations of latent homosexuality, though he is appropriately respectful of silences in the historical record.

⁹⁷ Daniel, *Life of Ailred*, p. 120.

⁹⁸ R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987). See also Steven F. Kruger, “Racial/Religious and Sexual Queerness in the Middle Ages,” *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 16 (1993), 32–36; and Susan Schibanoff, “Mohammed, Courtly Love, and the Myth of Western Heterosexuality,” in the same issue, pp. 27–32. Schibanoff sees the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as crucial in the West’s formulation of “the myth of heterosexuality, the rhetoric of which sought to banish same-sex erotic passion as a source of anything—virtue, art—deemed culturally or morally valuable . . . a paradigm shift . . . [in which] the older classical ideal of same-sex (male) love and friendship as the model of virtue gives way to the medieval one celebrating heterosexual passion as the sole source of goodness” (p. 28).

⁹⁹ A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), excludes Hilarius from his magisterial study on the grounds “There is no evidence that he was English, and his works did not circulate in England” (p. 360 n. 290).

accomplished plays in Latin verse: on Lazarus, on Daniel, and on the icon of St. Nicholas. They survive in a single manuscript containing two student songs, a versified *vita*, a poem in praise of Abelard's school at the Paraclete, and eight verse letters—three to nuns, one to a secular woman (praising her as a virgin of good family), and four to boys—all from his hand. These last four poems are uniformly erotic and seductive, with three of them working some variation on the theme "Jupiter would give up Ganymede for a boy like you. . . ." The conclusion to one may stand in for all:

Nam et rector superiorum,	Even the ruler of heaven,
raptor olim puerorum,	Once the ravisher of boys,
si nunc esset, tam decorum	If he were here now would carry off
ad celeste ferret torum.	Such beauty to his heavenly bower.
Aula tandem in superna,	Then, in the chambers of heaven,
satis prontus ad alterna,	You would be equally ready for either task:
nunc in toro, nunc pincerna,	Sometimes in bed, other times as cupbearer—
Jovi fores gratus una.	And Jove's delight as both. ¹⁰⁰

The *Play of Daniel* written by this same Hilary dramatizes an alternative, fully sanctioned way in which a man may love and esteem a boy. First Belshazzar and then Darius recognize in the youthful prophet a *puer senex*—a boy possessing wisdom and prudence beyond his years, worthy of sharing with them their kingly rule.¹⁰¹ But the verse letters Hilary wrote to contemporary boys (real or fictional) gave passionate voice to something quite other. The slim manuscript offers tantalizing witness both to a complex ecclesiastical culture and to a single, highly ambivalent authorial life.

The relevance of all of this material depends, of course, on reading the cupbearer role in *The Son of Getron* as a coded way of talking about what the sixteenth century would call a "catamite"—the very word deriving from *catamitus*, a corrupt collateral form of the Latin *Ganymedes*. But that is precisely how the high Middle Ages chiefly interpreted the myth's meaning. As Alain de Lille put it in *The Complaint of Nature*, the boy that Jupiter "had made his wine-master by day, he made his subject in bed by night. Bacchus and Apollo, likewise, by inversion

¹⁰⁰ Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*, pp. 68–75, prints the Latin texts with translations; his "To Love a Medieval Boy" offers a lively guide to the tradition, with Hilary's poems discussed on pp. 161–68. See also Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 239, 249, and 372–74, for translations of three of these (including the one I quote above, p. 374). Raby, *Secular Latin Poetry*, 2:115–18, is also relevant, though he declares himself skeptical (in the fashion of that time) that such poems could actually mean anything: "It is not clear whether they are to be regarded as shameless personal poems or as daring exercises such as were often circulated in the schools in the twelfth century" (p. 117). Even if no more than "exercises," one must wonder at the fact they were so often "circulated in the schools." Young, *Drama of the Latin Church*, 2:211–19, 276–90, 337–43, prints the texts of Hilary's plays.

¹⁰¹ For the text, see Young, 2:276–90; the Beauvais *Play of Daniel* (written and signed by students at the cathedral school—"et invenit hunc iuventus") shows a similar interest in defining intergenerational relationships between adult men and youths (see Young, 2:290–306). On the Beauvais play, see Dunbar H. Ogden, ed., *"The Play of Daniel": Critical Essays* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1997). On the *puer senex* see J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 95–102 (with Daniel discussed, p. 96), 111–16, 120–23; on the *puer sanctus* or "holy youth," a related topos less relevant here, see McLaughlin, p. 167 n. 154.

turned boys into women. . . ."¹⁰² In supplanting Juno's daughter Hebe, Ganymede offered pleasures beyond wine at table.¹⁰³

When King Marmorinus calls for his cupbearer near the end of the play, he does so as a man monstrously hungry, thirsty, and desirous, all at once, and he thinks his power secure: "No one can take you from me / As long as I do not wish to lose you." But he is wrong. St. Nicholas (and with him now, the force of the play as a whole) picks up the boy, cup still in hand, and returns him to his mother—his role as cupbearer available for redefinition in Christian terms.¹⁰⁴ In this final action the play decisively rejects the love of the king for the love of the mother, a love at once protective, nurturing, and centered upon family, now significantly extended to include the clerics and the poor who feed at her table. I think it significant that the father is given no dialogue at the play's end, even though he is the first to be notified of the boy's return. Instead, the concluding action and song are the mother's alone: "Cumque huiusmodi nuntium audierit Eufrosina, ad filium suum currat; quem saepius deosculatum amplexetur et dicat . . ." (line 163a; "And when Eufrosina has heard the message of this kind, let her run to her son; and kissing him constantly, let her embrace him and say . . ."). It is with the mother and boy, not the boy and king, or even the boy and father, that this play takes its stand.

But even this invites further reflection, since (I shall argue) *The Son of Getron* is less a play about man/boy love (in a specifically sexual sense) than a play about men loving boys across a spectrum of possible ways.¹⁰⁵ It was able to resolve its most troubled (and buried) issues in performance at least by virtue of one simple fact: the women's roles in monastic drama were also played by monks or boys.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² *De planctu naturae* 8, pr. 4. I quote from *The Complaint of Nature*, trans. James J. Sheridan, *Medieval Sources in Translation* 26 (Toronto, 1980), p. 139.

¹⁰³ See, e.g., the poem *Post aquile raptus* ("Ganymede and Hebe") in Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 392–98. On Hebe's importance in the later tradition, see Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance*, pp. 113–20, and for a celebratory image of Ganymede's triumph over her, see, e.g., the Parmigianino drawing reproduced as fig. 3.8.

¹⁰⁴ A St. Nicholas initial from a Dominican Gradual made in Switzerland, c. 1300 (Zurich, Landesmuseum MS 226117, fol. 293r), shows the story in two scenes: the boy presenting the golden cup to the king below, with a rescuing angel at his back; and the boy carrying it proudly to the Church of Saint Nicholas above, the saint behind him with his hand raised in blessing. In the upper scene, the cup looks as though it is already the liturgical vessel it seems likely to become. In terms of the monastic refectory, we may note with Quinn, pp. 125–26, that a boy was sometimes allowed to serve the abbot at table, but always as "a special privilege . . . executed in the presence of the watching assembly." Servitude and compulsion had no place in that custom.

¹⁰⁵ The sexual subtext of the *Filius Getronis* is in fact paralleled in the *Tres Filiae* (*The Three Daughters*), also in the Fleury Playbook. There St. Nicholas brings a dowry in gold to an impoverished father to prevent his daughters' being given up to a life of prostitution (text in Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2:316–24). The Hildesheim version of this story (Young, 2:311–16) is newly edited, translated, and well introduced by Dronke, *Nine Medieval Latin Plays*, pp. 52–71.

¹⁰⁶ There is an error in theater history to be corrected here. A sculptural relief from the parish church in Gusterf, Germany, c. 1130, first published by William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions, c.800–1576* (Cambridge, Eng., 1978), fig. 2 (p. 37), has been thought to show three Marys as "male clerics in vestments" (p. 36), because of what seems to be a beard on the Mary to the far left. Photographs suggest as much, but the "beard" in fact is only a trick

The *Visitatio Sepulchri* (*Visit to the Sepulchre*) from the same Fleury Playbook calls for this in absolutely unembarrassed terms: “tres fratres praeparati et vestiti in similitudinem trium Mariarum . . .” (“three brethren, prepared and vested in imitation of the three Marys . . .”).¹⁰⁷

Holding this image in mind, let us think still further about *The Son of Getron* as a cultural performance—a ritualized event in which the community confronted something problematic in the monastic vocation that was also essential and life-giving to it. If we allow for the mother’s being played by someone male—a monk or an older novice of the abbey—then the cross-dressing intrinsic to the role becomes expressive, against the king’s example, of another way for men to love boys: “maternally,” nurturing them and protecting them in ways traditionally ascribed to biological mothers and the feminine gender. That is, after all, what infant oblation had offered Christian society from the time it was first institutionalized: the willingness of a monastic house to provide nurture, education, and protection, in the form of a surrogate family, to any boy offered at its altar. A life of St. Bernard, written c. 1180, describes him going to visit the novices soon after his return from a journey, so that “these young and tender sucklings might be refreshed the more abundantly with the milk of his consolation.”¹⁰⁸ The metaphor would have struck no one as fanciful or strained (nor, I would guess, the need for “consolation”). Monks raised from childhood in the monastery were for the rest of their lives called *nutriti* (from *nutrire*, to nurse, suckle, nourish, foster, bring up, rear), to distinguish them from the *conversi*, monks or lay brothers who came to the monastery as adults, too late to be trained to priestly orders.¹⁰⁹

of lighting, showing a rough cavity in the Mary’s chin where a piece of stone has been chipped away. See Franz Rademacher, *Die Gustorfer Chorschranken: Das Hauptwerk der Romanischen Kölner Plastik* (Bonn, 1975), p. 21. (I am grateful to the Reverend H. de Zwart, pastor of the church at Gustorf, for furnishing me this information.) Although Tydeman describes the relief wrongly (it had me convinced, too), he forgets its implications, which are independently real, as he imagines “women singing from a door leading to the cloisters of the monastery” in a performance of the *Filius Getronis* (p. 56). In fact the “women” who seek to comfort the monk playing Euphrosina would likewise have been played by youths or men. The performance of this play by the New York Ensemble for Early Music, directed by Frederick Renz, in the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York, 1981, used an all-male cast; it was recorded (along with the other three Nicholas plays from Fleury) as *The Play of St. Nicholas: A Twelfth-Century Liturgical Drama* by Musicmasters Records (MM Stereo 20049/50). Its jacket art shows a production photograph of the *Tres Filiae*, all three daughters correctly and unmistakably male. Three of the plays, lacking only the *Tres Clerici*, have been recorded by the Schola Hungarica, conducted by László Dobszay, on Hungaraton Records, 2 CDs (HCD 12887–88), but using women’s voices in the female roles.

¹⁰⁷ In Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, p. 39. As the *Regularis concordia* (pp. 49–50) says of a related liturgical ceremony, “Aguntur enim haec ad imitationem angeli . . . atque mulierum” (“Now these things are done in imitation of the angel . . . and of the women”). On the rarity of men cross-dressing as women in the Middle Ages, except for drama or festival performance, see Vern L. Bullough, “Cross Dressing and Gender Role Change in the Middle Ages,” in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Bullough and Brundage (above, n. 4), pp. 223–42. Women who dressed as men secretly—in order to renounce their sexuality, to become more “rational,” or to achieve sanctity—are, in contrast, not uncommon in the historical record.

¹⁰⁸ PL 185:422, quoted by McLaughlin, p. 174 n. 197.

¹⁰⁹ Quinn, pp. 139–40, quotes Anselm’s discussion of this difference; *nutriti* were thought to have the potential to live perfect lives, since they had encountered no influence other than that of the

All of which can help explain the prominence given the mother in this play. Female figuration defines as real and possible a love that is tender and nurturing but not erotic. Though the claims of patriarchy are honored in the play's title, *Filius Getronis/The Son of Getron*, it is the mother who mourns the loss of her son, is comforted by other women, vows to fast until his return, sets out the table of charity, prays to Nicholas for his intercession, embraces and kisses the boy when he is restored, and is given the play's final dramatic utterance, a song of praise addressed to "our father Nicholas."¹¹⁰ Getron, in contrast, speaks only once in the entire play.¹¹¹ Even the music gives priority to the maternal relation, assigning to each character his own theme or motif, except that the mother's musical theme is uniquely echoed by the son in his own song of grief. Fletcher Collins described this repetition as an "umbilical effect"—an idea the musicologist Clyde Brockett elaborated further, seeing it as a birth cord extending beyond the natural mother to Mother Church herself.¹¹² I would adjust that description just a little,

monastery. On the increasing inclusiveness of the term *conversi* (adult novices, monks who would not be educated to take priestly orders, and later, especially in Cistercian contexts, lay brothers of lower-class origin who did manual work quite different from that of the literate choir monks), see de Jong, pp. 100–102, 126–32, 297–99. In the earlier period, "a *conversus* was simply a monk who was not a *nutritus*, brought up in the cloister" (p. 129).

¹¹⁰ This emphasis on the maternal is a dramatic choice, not the inevitable bent of the story. In *La vie de Saint Nicolas*, as told by Wace, likewise based on the *Vita* by John the Deacon, the father is unmistakably the more important parent. It is he who goes to the church alone to grieve for his missing son, he who first recognizes him, runs to kiss him ("Corut vers lui si l'ad beisé"), and rejoices greatly at his return (lines 1055–80). About the mother we are told simply that she was very glad, having previously been very angry—"Eüfrosine en fu mult lee / Que devant ceo iert corucee" (lines 1081–82)—and that she weeps for joy when she hears his story: "La mere l'oït, de joie plore" (line 1086). For the edition cited, see above, n. 75.

¹¹¹ In that single speech (lines 85–100), Getron urges his wife to cease her mourning and venerate St. Nicholas the following day; he attributes to God the inspiration to do so. Studying medieval records of childhood, McLaughlin came to this interesting conclusion: "By contrast with this emphasis on the maternal figure and her influence, fathers and their relations with their children assume a more modest and sometimes ambiguous place in our sources. If the father was not virtually absent from the child's early life, as he frequently was in a military and expansionist society, he is often depicted as the worldlier, less admirable figure, drawing the child away from his religious vocation, or more rarely, displaying . . . outright hostility" (p. 128). Getron is neither absent nor hostile in our play, but Euphrosina occupies a larger emotional and symbolic space vis-à-vis their son. Again, an alternative emphasis would have been possible, since the word "abbot" derives ultimately from an Aramaic word meaning "father," and an abbot was traditionally called *pater* in Latin. Paternal metaphors therefore figure significantly in monastic discourse of the high Middle Ages, as between St. Anselm and the oblate Osbern (see Boswell, *Kindness*, pp. 308–9), or in the saint's famous conversation with an abbot who complains that boys are incorrigible, no matter how much they are beaten. Anselm rebukes him, saying he should treat them instead "with fatherly kindness and pity" (from Eadmer's life of the saint, in Coulton, *Life in the Middle Ages*, 2, part 4, p. 103). Having hated his own father, Anselm found in Lanfranc, at the monastery at Bec, a new "father," just as he would become a father to others in turn. St. Bernard, too, consoled the sadness of a young novice with these words: "I pity thee even as a father pitieth his own children" (ibid., p. 167). Our play, instead, chooses to develop the maternal relation. On this matter, see Caroline Walker Bynum's brilliant study, "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing," chap. 4 in her *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), with an extensive bibliography, p. 111 n. 3.

¹¹² Brockett, "Persona in *Cantilena*" (above, n. 41), pp. 20–22; the boy's own musical theme, inter-

referring it more specifically to the monastic community, which spoke of itself as a family, took on itself the role of parental surrogate, and thought of its youngest members as “communal children.” When Count Theobald of Francia offered his son to Cluny, he expressed the wish that the boy should thereby “acquire religious rather than worldly, wealthy parents.”¹¹³ Hugh of Lincoln was remembered as having shown “almost motherly affection” to his monks, a claim Aelred of Rievaulx made directly to the monks and novices attending his death: “I love you earnestly as a mother does her sons.”¹¹⁴ In Paul the Deacon’s ninth-century exposition of the Benedictine rule, the superiority of the monastic family over its biological equivalent is powerfully expressed: “It is well that he [St. Benedict] ordered them to be called *fratres* because they have been reborn in the same sacred font of Baptism, they have been sanctified by the same Spirit, they have professed the same profession, they hope to attain to the same reward, and are all sons of Holy Mother Church. It is to be noted that this spiritual brotherhood is greater than that of the flesh.” It has been argued that Paul’s expositions of the rule, including this passage, were written specifically for the benefit of oblates, to be delivered at morning chapter.¹¹⁵

Some such rationale was necessary, as the grief dramatized at the center of the *Filius Getronis* makes clear. For the separating of boys from their natural parents is precisely what oblation, stripped of ideology, is about: an act, we might say, more truly “against nature” than any of the manifestations of same-sex love and desire that monastic life took such pains to prevent.¹¹⁶ The Utrecht Psalter contains five depictions of child oblation, one of them (Ps. 26.10) showing a man and woman leading a child to church, the child clutching at his mother’s skirt, illustrating the verse “For my father and mother have left me: but the Lord hath taken me up.”¹¹⁷ Further testimony comes from the Anglo-Norman monk Orderic Vitalis, author of the *Historia ecclesiastica* (c. 1138), recollecting as an old man his own experience of oblation: “So, weeping, [my father] gave me, a weeping child, into the care of the monk Reginald and sent me away into exile for the love of Thee, and never saw me again. . . . [H]e promised me for his part that if I became a monk I should taste of the joys of heaven with the Innocents after my death. . . . And so, a boy of ten, I crossed the English channel and came into Normandy as an exile, unknown to all, knowing no one. Like Joseph in Egypt, I heard a language

estingly enough, is given to the saint himself in the *Tres Filiae* and the *Imago*. See also Brockett’s “Modal and Motivic Coherence in the Music of the Music-Dramas in the Fleury Playbook,” in *The Fleury Playbook*, ed. Campbell and Davidson, esp. pp. 46–49. The *Filius Getronis* is musically the most elaborate composition in the entire playbook.

¹¹³ Quinn, pp. 33, 137. As she puts it, what is enacted here is “the child’s exchange from one family to another. . . .”

¹¹⁴ See McLaughlin, p. 132, and de Jong, pp. 50–51, for other examples, including Alcuin, who remembered the “motherly love” his “dear fathers” in York had provided him in his youth.

¹¹⁵ Quoted by Quinn, p. 97; see also p. 103 n. 49.

¹¹⁶ It is true that male children of the nobility were sometimes sent off to be raised in other noble households, through networks of artificial kinship such as *commendatio*, baptismal sponsorship, and fosterage (see de Jong, chap. 6). But these were secular households of men and women, boys and girls; they were not single-sex communities devoted to chastity, fear of sex, and separation from the world.

¹¹⁷ Quinn, p. 94 and fig. 33.

I could not understand. But Thou didst suffer me through thy grace to find nothing but kindness and friendship among strangers. I was received as an oblate in the monastery of St. Evroul. . . .”¹¹⁸ It is worth looking again at Figure 4, from the early fourteenth century, this time to note that the oblate is shown as very young—much younger in fact than would have been admissible at that date. This odd representational choice is logical only in terms of the picture’s affective meaning. It communicates the pathos of the experience for both father and child.¹¹⁹ Monastic anxiety concerning love *contra naturam* we have already uncovered in this play. Let me suggest now that a certain institutional anxiety about child oblation may be discovered there as well. The trauma of oblation/separation must often have produced in the oblate a heightened need for human love (in the monastery, same-sex love, the only kind available), or to name the risk differently, the possibility of desire—spiritually incestuous—within a family that is not a family. A ready parallel can be drawn between the son of Getron, separated, he thinks forever, from his parents, and the boy who played him, separated by oblation forever from his own. On one level or another, whoever played Adeodatus would have brought his own experience of separation to the role.

In all this I do not mean to devalue the play as an act of pious devotion. Euphrosina in her grief implicitly invites comparison to Rachel, weeping for her children (Jer. 31.15), or the mothers of the innocents killed at Christ’s nativity (Matt. 2: with internal reference, at verses 17–18, to Rachel weeping, in Jeremiah), or the Virgin Mary herself, when the twelve-year-old Christ was lost and found among the doctors. Figural resonance of this sort helps account for the fact that Euphrosina’s lament occupies so large a place in the play. But *as a cultural performance*, I think we may see in the extensive mourning permitted the mother, and the extended grief allowed her son, some recognition of oblation’s human cost, and the monastery’s occasional need for some ritualized reconstruction of its institutional nature and purpose. Patricia Quinn, examining the ninth-century Utrecht Psalter for evidence concerning oblation, notes that in many of its pictures—one for each of the 150 psalms—“good fathers were those who took up the responsibility to provide physically and spiritually for their children. . . . Evil fathers are most frequently depicted as soldiers and kings.” She suggests that this contrast between good and bad fathers—by implication, between the monastic and the biological—offered “an explanation to the oblate of his parents’ seemingly

¹¹⁸ Quoted by Quinn, pp. 138–39. Orderic remained in that monastery for the rest of his life. McLaughlin, p. 129, believes child oblation remained the principal source of monastic recruitment for at least two more centuries, perhaps longer, and situates it within a social context where noble families often sent their male children to be reared in the households of overlords or noble relations (p. 170 n. 175).

¹¹⁹ The Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple, at the age of three, to be raised among temple virgins, was still being called “hire oblacioune” in a late-fifteenth-century English translation of the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (chap. 5, line 709). The unnaturalness of the act (its confusion and pain) is well prefigured in that work by Jephthah’s sacrifice of his infant daughter. See Avril Henry, ed., *The Mirour of Mans Saluacioun: A Middle English Translation of “Speculum humanae salvationis”* (Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 58–61, with woodcut illustrations of both events.

inexplicable desertion of him. The verses and illustrations explain that one's father belongs to the generation that repeatedly offends the Lord."¹²⁰

The play can be seen as asking—from within the community, for the sake of the community's own conscience and understanding—just what it is monks do when they take young boys from their mothers, raise them through adolescence, deny them (as they deny themselves) all contact with the female sex, and offer them their love, however distant and austere. What dangers attend such recruitment? What protections are in place? What goals are served? What explanations to the world of natural parents and natural parenting are to be made?

For what must have seemed to many a child/oblate something close to motiveless abandonment—a potentially traumatic event, even after the minimum age of reception had been raised from five to twelve—the play offers an implicit apologia. It represents the life of a boy as a contest between an evil king and a good father, and then, within a context of grief and spiritual danger, essentially replaces the father with a mother and a saint, but all enacted by men. When “St. Nicholas” returns the boy to his natural family, he returns him quite literally to two of the monks (one of them cross-dressed as “mother”) who earlier in the boy's life had received him in just that way. Through this overlay of narratives, one hagiographic, the other monastic, the play clarifies for its community once again the logic of an institution intrinsically problematic, defending it against its detractors (there were many, even within the church, with the new orders of the Carthusians and the Cistercians refusing it altogether), and consoling the boys for their human loss. In foregrounding the monk as mother, the play proposes a way in which men can love boys with maternal love rather than predatory desire, in safety rather than danger, as freeborn children rather than captive slaves. What in other contexts would read simply as another miracle of St. Nicholas took on fresh and specific meaning within monastic drama. It allowed an all-male community, vowed to chastity, to confront and bring into symbolic resolution—if little more—certain challenges posed by homoerotic desire within its cloistered walls. Words already quoted from the tenth-century *Regularis concordia* can again help us take its measure: “In the monastery moreover let neither monks nor abbot embrace or kiss, as it were, youths or children; let their affection for them be spiritual, let them keep from words of flattery, and let them love the children reverently and with the greatest circumspection.”¹²¹ Though the dramatic action of the *Filius Getronis* ends with a monk and a boy in each other's arms (“let her run to her son; and kissing him constantly, let her embrace him and say . . .”), there is nothing of Jupiter and Ganymede in those kisses.

If any progress has been made in these pages toward recovering the functional richness of this early monastic play, it is because we have approached it both as a liturgical text and as a cultural performance, whose *enactors*—not actors in any modern sense—brought to its occasion their own deepest identities and concerns: cloistered, gendered, cross-generational, inescapably human. Though its first pur-

¹²⁰ Quinn, pp. 92–93.

¹²¹ See above, n. 39.

pose, of course, was universal and timeless—a dramatized celebration of saintly miracle, within the cursus of the liturgical year—it was made local and particular as well, addressing needs, tensions, and anxieties unique to the monastic community itself. And so we have looked to the monastery itself as a constituent source of meaning.

The sine qua non of such a project is a willingness to think about these texts free of their built-in coercions, to take seriously voices other than those that finally carry the day. I do not mean to suggest that medieval monasteries were raging hotbeds of homoerotic desire; that was surely not the case. But homoeroticism—particularly, though not exclusively, *across* generations, between the monks and the boys—was the form of carnal desire most dangerous within the cloister walls, as the rules, the customaries, and the penitentials all make unmistakably clear. In *The Son of Getron* I think one can hear, quite remarkably, the voice of homoerotic resistance as well as of homoerotic reconciliation.

For there is one more fact about this play to be considered: King Marmorinus is neither killed nor punished at its end—the normal fate of tyrants in liturgical drama—nor is his palace demolished by the wind, as specified in *The Golden Legend*. No exit is named, leaving David Bevington as editor to wonder quite rightly where he goes or what happens to him.¹²² My guess is he simply *remains*—as he does on a late-twelfth-century portal from the Church of San Salvatore in Lucca (Fig. 8), which at its center shows the saint twice, with the opposing banquets on either side, seizing the boy by his hair, just to the left of the door's center, and depositing him with his mother, just to the right.¹²³ The end of the Fleury play

¹²² David Bevington, "The Staging of Twelfth-Century Liturgical Drama in the Fleury Playbook," in *The Fleury "Playbook"*, ed. Campbell and Davidson, pp. 62–81; see p. 77.

¹²³ Figure 8: this lintel and another, nearly identical, from the cathedral of Barga just a few kilometers away have been carefully studied for the first time by Dorothy F. Glass, *Portals, Pilgrimage, and Crusade in Western Tuscany* (Princeton, N.J., 1997), figs. 40, 41, though Collins, *Production*, figs. 62, 63, earlier brought them to bear on the *Filius Getronis* (pp. 230–39). Glass dates the Lucca example c. 1187 and thinks that at Barga slightly later (p. 58); both may have been made in Lucca (pp. 50–52). Because these churches are situated on or near routes important to pilgrimage and crusade as well as commerce, Glass offers this account of their intended function: "Those going to the East for whatever motives risked being seized as was Adeodatus. His capture and his eventual rescue and return to his parents must have been a story dear to the heart of Tuscan parents who feared for their sons. The notion that their sons would be forced to live among the heathen was no empty worry" (p. 58). She supports this view with regulations issued by the Third Lateran Council in 1179 under the title "De Iudeis et Sarracenis," which declared Christians could not be servants in the houses of Moslems or Jews (p. 44).

This interpretation is quite plausible. Whether set above a doorway to a provincial cathedral (Barga) or a small parish church (San Salvatore at Lucca, whose modest exterior is shown in Glass's fig. 38), these images address the entire Christian community, lay folk even more than priests, in some manner (we may assume) relevant to their daily lives. But since our play was made for a monastic community, intergenerational, defined by obligations of stability (enclosure) as well as chastity, with little to fear from capture by Muslims in the East, I would assess its intention differently. In contrast to the lintels, it presents the boy and the king alone, in intimate conversation, on two occasions; and instead of setting two grand communal feasts side by side, the play contrasts the feast of charity at the house of Getron with the food and drink offered to Marmorinus's monstrous hunger as he dines alone. (The Assisi fresco, Fig. 6, does the same.) On the lintels, we should note, he dines *with his queen* as well as his courtiers, all of whom the boy serves as cupbearer. Different strokes for different folks. Glass makes no distinction between the intention of the lintels and that of the liturgical play, but she does note in

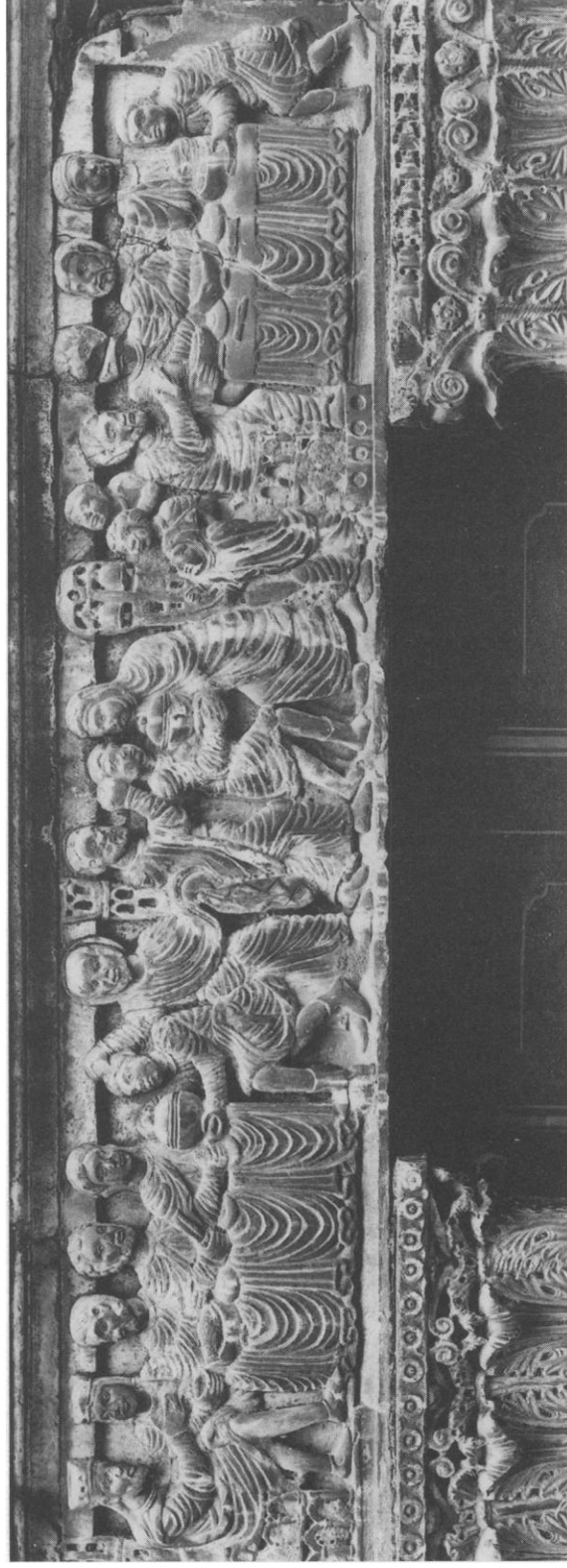


Fig. 8. The two feasts, with Adeodatus as cupbearer (left) and restored to his family (right).
Portal, Lucca, Church of San Salvatore.

must have presented a similar image, but with the king at table alone, his power illusory, his cupbearer gone. Its concluding action moves decisively across the church, to rest with the family (at once historical and monastic), including the poor and the clerics it was the monks' duty (occasionally, ritually) to receive and feed.¹²⁴ But Marmorinus's continuing presence has itself a symbolic weight, attesting to the survival of marginalized desire not only in the world represented by *the play* but in the monastery that invented and performed it.

In such a reading Marmorinus remains in view as a relict of the main action, something left behind, unaccommodated but very real, because his voice—the voice of the forbidden, the unspeakably other—must, for the psychic health of the community, be acknowledged (if only covertly), honored (if only briefly), and voiced over (in the concluding action) by alternative forms of living and loving. The *ritual significance* of such an action—that which is surplus to the historical event represented—is always particular to its community¹²⁵ and is likely to be gendered differently for men than for women.¹²⁶ (Women would not have been audience to this play, nor laypersons from outside the monastery; it was performed as part of the Office of lauds, in the dark hours of early morning, in Latin verse that few lay folk would have been able to understand.)¹²⁷ The love of men for

conclusion, regarding this and several other portal subjects, “The Tuscans were citizens of the commercial world, not of the Cluniac or university world. For them, the directness of the here and now was more relevant than the next life” (p. 62). She convinces me regarding the Tuscan lintels, but the interpretive horizons of the *Filius Getronis* are in fact precisely those of the Benedictine/Cluniac world.

¹²⁴ Milis, *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men*, pp. 53–62, discussing “the works of mercy” as performed in a monastery, notes that these often amounted to little more than a ritualized reception of pilgrims and guests (for the most part, important people whose arrival has been “announced” in advance) and the feeding of twelve poor men on Maundy Thursday at the monastery gate. Helping poor people was not a high priority for the monks, whose attention was focused on the afterlife, not on the here-and-now needs of their neighbors. But occasional gestures toward charity were nevertheless deemed necessary.

¹²⁵ For instance, when medieval monks enacted the pilgrims to Emmaus, they did more than dramatize a moment of confusion and failed devotion in sacred history. In “representing” two of the disciples who met Christ on the road, supped with him, and did not recognize him until the moment of his vanishing, they would have brought to that ritualized event *their own experience* of the fact that there is no faith without doubt, no God whose identity is always clear, no God who does not sometimes seem to vanish. By enacting the disciples' sadness, confusion, and despair within the hours of the Divine Office itself—at vespers, with darkness coming on—the monks acknowledged painful aspects of their own vocation as part of a process they saw reflected in the salvation story itself, where it ends in renewed faith.

¹²⁶ Kathleen M. Ashley, “The Fleury *Raising of Lazarus* and Twelfth-Century Currents of Thought,” in *The Fleury “Playbook,”* ed. Campbell and Davidson, pp. 100–119, reads that play, very astutely, as reflecting the new monastic emphasis on friendship. In it, the love felt for Lazarus by his sisters, Mary and Martha—“care frater,” “frater carissime”—and by Christ, who is the pattern and summation of such love, restores him to life. I would add to Ashley's account only a reminder that the “sisters” who love their brother so were themselves played by men—by monks or novices—who customarily addressed each other as *frater*. Thus the “feminized” love and faith so powerfully dramatized in this play are validated and made exemplary even within an all-male community.

¹²⁷ Exactly who might have seen these plays from the nave—through which the action sometimes moves, and which sometimes (the manuscript is a compilation) contains a *populus* addressed in the action—is far from clear. It precludes any confident, much less universal, answer. Bevington, “Staging,” has explored the issue at length, working from rubrics within the plays (our only evidence, however

each other, including the love of men for boys, at one end of the moral spectrum deemed so vile as to be unnameable, was, at the other, an essential aspect of monastic life—an inevitable part of its emotional equation—and required for its management highly evolved strategies of repression, sublimation, and transformation. That love, which monastic asceticism elsewhere sought to extirpate, is here resolved by enacting a redemptive metaphor—the monastery as mother, nurturing and protecting from violation her young sons—in a fashion instructive to all within the claustral walls. Though the first purpose of this play was to serve the cult of St. Nicholas, its other most urgent task (if my argument has proved persuasive) was to reinscribe clerical chastity in the face of same-sex desire, situational or innate, most especially across the generations.

In this it undertakes more than the Ganymede capital at Vézelay, which requires

spare) to declare the Fleury plays conscious of “a congregation” present in that space. But he admits many difficulties to this view, some practical (action taking place in the choir would often not have been visible from the nave) and some institutional, carefully estimated on p. 65, where he glosses the *populus* or *plebs* addressed in the Fleury *Visit to the Sepulchre*—the “persons in the nave”—as “lay brethren, others connected with the monastery, [and] conceivably persons from outside the monastic confines . . . in attendance at Easter matins.” The presence of lay brothers is unproblematic: they were a vital part of monastic life and their place properly in the nave, though their attendance at the Divine Office was neither obligatory nor perhaps very frequent. But their possible presence is enough *on its own* to make sense of the rubrics. One may provisionally accept “others connected to the monastery” as well, though the concept is understandably vague, and their number would have been limited by the fact that most of these plays were performed at matins, in the middle of the night, when lay attendance may be doubted. One can also, with Bevington, “conceivably” imagine persons from outside the monastic community sometimes attending as well: important guests and well-born pilgrims, in the case of monastic pilgrimage churches. But they would not have been numerous; their presence should not be assumed; they were not the audience the play was invented or performed for; and it is extremely unlikely they ever included women. Bevington’s analysis of the stagecraft of these plays is always thoughtful and informed, but his choice of synonyms like “the congregation,” “the laity,” and “the people” risks misunderstanding, since in modern usage we conceive such groups more inclusively. If laypersons from the outside ever *were* witness to the *Getron* play, I imagine them experiencing the play in simpler ways than the monks and novices I have in mind above—not only because they would have brought other kinds of lived experience to the story, but because the actual words being sung would have been incomprehensible to almost all of them. C. Clifford Flanigan, in an important essay, “The Fleury Playbook, the Traditions of Medieval Latin Drama, and Modern Scholarship,” in *The Fleury “Playbook,”* ed. Campbell and Davidson, pp. 1–25, has this to say: “The meaning of a work is subject to constant alteration; it is always the product of the interplay between the text itself and the varying horizons of expectations that different audiences bring to it. . . . Nor is it correct to say that such subsequent acts of reception are mistaken ones. . . . The new literary history that the study of the Latin drama now demands must afford the place of eminence to readers and audiences, whose roles . . . [were] at least as crucial as author or scribe” (pp. 22–23). He stresses the heterogeneity of the Fleury collection, the fact it is not a “service book” as such, and along the way doubts that the *Filius Getronis* is liturgical in origin. While allowing that “the Fleury plays could be and probably often were performed as part of a liturgical celebration,” including the three other St. Nicholas plays in this judgment (p. 5), he prefers to think of the *Filius Getronis* as originating in a school exercise, “possibly in a non-monastic setting (or in the section of a monastic school set aside for boys who were not oblates)” (p. 12). But there is no need (or evidence) for such a hypothesis, and he fails to note that the play ends in the antiphon appointed for lauds on St. Nicholas’s Day, making its claims to a liturgical context as strong as any other in the Playbook. I write on that assumption here—it seems the obvious first assumption—while acknowledging, with Flanigan, that other audiences cannot be ruled out, and that their experience of the play’s meaning would indeed differ.

of monastic chastity that it refrain from a specific sexual act, that of child seduction. The Fleury play extends this to include the more difficult task of controlling the affections, of abstaining from homoerotic desire itself, even if its physical expression is not an issue. The Vézelay capital may seem to us the more severe, the more fierce and uncompromising. But the Fleury play—by exemplifying the emotional dimension of homosexuality, by daring to present the king's feelings for the boy as *love* rather than mere lust—actually demands more from its monastic audience. It dramatizes the *emotional* loss attendant on monastic chastity, in a way the Ganymede capital does not. To choose chastity is to give up eros altogether, though the possibility of loving “maternally” is offered as consolation.

In the historical archive of the Middle Ages, Simon Gaunt has suggested, gay sexuality is “often only visible in the form of homophobia,”¹²⁸ dedicated to the production of a compulsory, universal heterosexuality. But within monastic communities, the project defined itself rather differently, seeking to produce a compulsory *chastity*, free from gender distinctions of any kind. The monk who dressed as King Marmorinus was called upon to voice a kind of love the play will frustrate, just as the monk who dressed as Euphrosina is asked to enact the possibility of loving a boy without carnal desire, in maternal, nonerotic ways. Both models, of course, are ultimately homophobic. But we should note that a reinscription of normative heterosexuality has no place whatsoever in this play's purpose. Marmorinus is not punished; he is merely denied and deprived of his desire. I think we have found here one of those “particular sites of struggle” theorized by Steven Kruger, where groups that the dominant culture stigmatized because they were female, Jewish, heretical, or queer “resisted silencing even as they were brought to silence”—one of those places where it is possible “to hear, in however muted and distorted a fashion, the queer presences against which [medieval] homophobia was anxiously erected.”¹²⁹

This essay should not be thought of as an “outing”—it is not about scandal, nor is it meant to scandalize. It concerns an aspect of our humanness—our need to love and be loved within our own kind—that is neither sin nor pathology. I do not think of myself in these pages as reading “against the grain”—against the intention of the text—but rather as attending to something parallel to it, coded but consequential, running deep within. My goal has not been to reduce the play to a simple or single meaning, but rather to rescue it from that fate—from scholarship that has found little of interest here, beyond the formal or the antiquarian, because it so readily presumes heterosexual chastity as normative and untroubled within the medieval cloister.

To return to my beginning. The recovery of gay voices from within the medieval period will never be easy or sufficient, since its written record was created upon the premise that same-sex desire is too shameful to be named. But in matters officially declared unmentionable, absence of evidence (to borrow a phrase from nuclear physics) is not evidence of absence. We must make ourselves alert to subtleties, nuances, buried texts, and submerged images, or risk becoming ourselves

¹²⁸ Gaunt, “Gay Studies and Feminism,” p. 5.

¹²⁹ Steven F. Kruger, “Claiming the Pardoner: Toward a Gay Reading of Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale,” *Exemplaria* 6 (1994), 115–39 (at p. 139).

complicit in that act of historical suppression. Jonathan Dollimore in his study of sexual dissidence proposed an alternative assumption, which I respectfully second here: "whatever a culture designates as alien, utterly other, and incommensurably different," he writes, "is rarely and perhaps never so."¹³⁰

APPENDIX

Anyone who has followed my argument thus far will be interested in the *Passion of St. Pelagius*, written by the learned nun Hrotswitha of Gandersheim around the year 962. Its 413 lines of Latin verse recount the martyrdom of a Christian youth in Córdoba who was put to death for refusing an Arab ruler's sexual advances, in the year 925. (Hrotswitha based her poem on the report of a citizen of Córdoba, who had witnessed the execution.) In this passion Pelagius, in "the first bloom of young manhood," offers himself as a hostage in order to free his father, a Christian king, from captivity at the hands of a despotic Arab ruler, Abd ar-Rahman III—in Hrotswitha's version called a king. When Arab courtiers visit the foul dungeon where the youth is kept, they are so struck by his beauty and eloquence that they wish to free him. Knowing their king is "debauched by the vice of sodomy" and eager "to unite himself . . . in friendship" with "boys who were lovely of face," they suggest to him that the "tender virility" of this hostage be spared. "If you were to see his exceptional good looks and to savor his honeyed speech—how you would want to bring such a young man into your retinue. . . . Dazzling as he is in his person, he could serve in your palace!" The king orders them to bathe Pelagius, dress him in purple, adorn him with a jeweled necklace, and bring him to the royal court—where indeed his beauty "outshone in splendor the palace guards and the courtiers wearing togas. All eyes turned to gaze at him. . . ." The king, drawn to him at a glance, commands that Pelagius be seated next to him on the royal throne "so that he might touch him ardently. He bent his head and in his eagerness tried to kiss those adored lips, while putting his arms around his neck. . . . But the soldier of Christ would not suffer this kind of love from a pagan king who was polluted with the lust of the flesh. . . ." Pelagius fends him off scornfully, saying a Christian must not defile himself with the kiss of one who embraces "witless men who worship senseless earthen gods. . . . Let the men who grovel to images be your friends!" The lascivious king nevertheless persists. "O you petulant boy!" he says, don't you know you can lose your life for this? "Come to me with a steadfast love in your heart. . . . Obey my orders. . . . I adore you in my heart, and I'm choosing to esteem you over all the courtiers in my hall . . . you shall be second in this proud kingdom." Again he puts an arm around Pelagius's neck, trying "to fix at least one kiss," leading Pelagius to strike the king so hard that blood pours from his face. Angry at last, the king orders him cast from the city walls, to be broken on the cliffs and river below. Pelagius, however, as "companion of Christ," survives the fall "untorn." And so the king orders his head cut off. Pelagius's soul soars heavenward, to receive the palm of martyrdom—"the victory prize of burning love"—awarded him because he sacrificed himself for his father and because he "kept his virginity well."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford, 1982), p. 182.

¹³¹ Translated by Marcelle Thiébaux, ed., *The Writings of Medieval Women: An Anthology*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1994), pp. 188–98, with an extensive introduction, pp. 171–88. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, chap. 1, provides a close study of several texts of Pelagius's martyrdom and their place in the anti-Muslim campaign of the medieval church; pp. 18–22 discuss Hrotswitha's version. In her account, we should note, Pelagius's objection is as much against fraternization with pagans as against same-sex love.

Another account, written by an Iberian priest named Raguel, possibly earlier but certainly before 967, foregrounds the sexual theme even more powerfully. In it, Christ as bridegroom (*sponsus*) protects the thirteen-year-old boy in prison, teaching him virtue and increasing his beauty daily. This Pelagius rejects the king's overtures by casting off his rich clothing and standing naked before the crowd, "like an athlete . . . in the palaestra," repudiating effeminacy, Mark Jordan suggests, "as an eager lover might, just to show the king what he cannot have." As Jordan reads it, this version presents "a passionate triangle in which all the parties are male. [Pelagius] does not deny same-sex love so much as he vindicates it by choosing Christ as his lover."¹³²

The Fleury play shares several themes with the legend of Pelagius, but its sexual content is masked, available only to those who understand "cupbearer" as a code word and are attentive to certain nuances in the king's dialogues with the boy. In my view, the king's love for the boy does not so much stand for exotic Saracen vice—though that may indeed be part of it, worth exploring elsewhere¹³³—as for something always potential within the life of the monastic community, to be acknowledged, controlled, and corrected. But in this play, for a time at least, it is presented as a kind of love.¹³⁴

¹³² Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 16. On the cult of Pelagius among women religious, and on the complex feelings invoked by the liturgy for his feast day, see pp. 23–25. That liturgy, he notes, focuses as intently on Pelagius's beauty as did the caliph. It was, of course, celebrated by monks and novices as well.

¹³³ See, for a start, Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 399: "Popular writers sometimes associated sodomitical practices with Islam, and Jacques de Vitry declared that Muhammad himself had introduced sodomy to the Arab world. Perhaps because of this association, Vincentius Hispanus pointedly declared that homosexuals were not wanted in the army of the Crusade." John Bowers has suggested to me that the play's pagan king may be seen as an Islamic lord of the sort notorious for this kind of sexual predation—one who subjects the sons of his defeated enemies to sexual abuse—transformed in this play into tenderness rather than violation.

¹³⁴ For permission to reproduce the following pictures I wish to thank: Fig. 1: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, N.Y.; Fig. 2: Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale; Fig. 4: Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier; Fig. 5: James Austin, M.A., FIIP, Architectural and Fine Art Photography, Cambridge, Eng.; Fig. 6: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.; Fig. 7: Vienna, Bildarchiv, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek; Fig. 8: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.



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Author(s): David Brakke

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Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self

DAVID BRAKKE

Indiana University

ACCORDING TO ATHANASIUS of Alexandria, when the devil had failed to tempt the young monk Antony with thoughts of home and family or by coming to him as a woman, he desperately tried to seduce the ascetic by appearing as a black boy. Unimpressed, Antony told the devil, "You are black in your mind and as weak as a boy."¹ It was not the last time the devil or one of his demons would appear with black skin to an Egyptian monk, according to tales preserved in the monastic literature from the fourth and fifth centuries. A young monk beset by thoughts of sex encountered an Ethiopian woman with a foul smell. An older monk found an Ethiopian girl he remembered seeing in his youth sitting on his knees; driven mad, he struck her, and a foul odor adhered to his hand. Afflicted by pride, another monk was divinely instructed to reach for his neck, where

¹Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 6. Full citations for this and the other stories mentioned in these first two paragraphs will be provided below when they are discussed in detail. Translations from ancient sources are my own unless a modern translation is cited. I have used the following bibliographic abbreviations:

N—*Apophthegmata patrum* published by Nau in *Revue de l'orient chrétien*

PG—*Patrologia Graeca*

PL—*Patrologia Latina*

SC—Sources chrétiennes

This essay benefited from the questions and comments of an audience gathered by the Medieval Studies Institute of Indiana University in September 2000. A thoughtful and congenial group of colleagues read and discussed both postcolonial theory and this essay: Quinton Dixie, Bert Harrill, Michael Satlow, Mary Jo Weaver, and Steven Weitzman. Dyan Elliott, Charles Stewart, and this journal's anonymous reader generously provided detailed written responses. Daniel Boyarin and Elizabeth Castelli (as well as Virginia Burrus) intervened with support at a crucial moment. The research for this essay was supported by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies, neither of which is responsible for the opinions expressed here. I am grateful to all of these people and institutions.

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he found a small Ethiopian, which he cast into the sand. A monk who disobeyed his elder discovered an Ethiopian lying on a sleeping mat and gnashing his teeth. Ethiopian or black demons continued to tempt or frighten Christian ascetics into the medieval period.²

Demons were not the only Ethiopians in the desert. The famous Abba Moses, once a robber, became a monk renowned for his humility. Moses demonstrated his great humility by remaining silent when other monks at a meeting complained, "Why does this Ethiopian come among us?" Another time, prompted by the archbishop, priests drove Moses out of a church, crying, "Go outside, Ethiopian!" Moses said to himself, "They have acted rightly concerning you, you ash-skinned one, you black one. You are not a human being, so why do you go among human beings?" For the spiritually inclined modern reader, stories such as these come as a shock: their frankly apparent racism interrupts the Zen-like tranquillity that makes the sayings of the desert fathers so appealing. There are no Ethiopian demons in Thomas Merton's *Wisdom of the Desert*.³

Critical scholars have likewise found these accounts grimly fascinating. They have used them primarily as sources for the sentiments of early Christians and/or ancient people in general: were they racist or at least color-prejudiced?⁴ Investigation of this question culminated in Lloyd Thompson's comprehensive study, *Romans and Blacks*, which argued that the ancients did not have concepts exactly like the modern notion of "race" and thus

²Gregorio Penco, "Sopravvivenze della demonologia antica nel monachesimo medievale," *Studia Monastica* 13 (1971): 31–36.

³Even Abba Moses loses his blackness, becoming "a very old elder with a long black robe" instead of "big and black" (Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert* [New York, 1960], 36; cf. *Apophthegmata patrum* Moses 8 [PG 65:285]).

⁴Frank Snowden's relentlessly positive spin on even the most abusive stories about Abba Moses (*Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* [Cambridge, MA, 1970], 209–11) inevitably failed to persuade most readers. Philip Mayerson provided a useful corrective to Snowden's optimism, concluding that references to black demons and tauntings of Moses "must surely indicate a sentiment among some unlettered and theologically uninformed monks that black was not always beautiful" ("Anti-Black Sentiment in the *Vitae Patrum*," *Harvard Theological Review* 71 [1978]: 304–11, at 305). Although this conclusion rightly points to social level as a complicating factor in the analysis of ancient attitudes toward marginalized persons, it assumes too quickly that the "fathers" who abused Moses or told stories of black demons were illiterate or uneducated, an assumption that more recent scholarship has undermined. It also ignores that, for example, one of Moses' persecutors is an archbishop and that all of these stories now come to us *as literature*, often written by extremely well educated men (e.g., John Cassian). Peter Frost used monastic literature as part of a wider study of "attitudes toward blacks" among the early Christians: he also points to antiquity's "more rigid class structure" but unfortunately gives slavery a prominent place in his analysis, which has more to do with the modern American experience of a race-based slave system than with the Greco-Roman reality ("Attitudes Toward Blacks in the Early Christian Era," *Second Century* 8 [1991]: 1–11). The studies of Lellia Cracco Ruggini claimed that a more negative view of the Ethiopian arose in Egypt in the

that the question of whether they were racist is anachronistic. He profitably contextualized Roman images of Ethiopians within the Romans' more general ethnocentric reactions to foreignness in bodies and cultures.⁵ In this line of inquiry few scholars were interested in what the stories about Ethiopians may reveal about early Christian asceticism or monastic discourse in particular rather than about Christian or Roman attitudes in general.⁶ Lately, scholars of early Christianity have turned away from analyzing the monastic stories as sources of ancient feelings about blacks to examining them as rhetorical strategies within ascetic discourse. For example, Vincent Wimbush tentatively studied accounts of Moses as a rhetoric in which talk about color "functions as part of the discursive strategies for the valuation and commendation of" ascetic piety.⁷ Gay Byron has called the tales of Ethiopian demons, especially female ones, a rhetoric of "vituperation" that polices ethnic as well as ascetic boundaries: they "represent a type of political invective which effectively marginalizes Ethiopians."⁸

While there can be no doubt that one effect of these stories is to demonize Ethiopians, it seems equally if not more accurate to say that they Ethiopianize demons. In the monastic literature emanating from fourth- and fifth-century Egypt, appearances of black or Ethiopian demons are generically widespread but numerically few. On the one hand, such stories are found in nearly every form of early monastic literature, ranging from the collected sayings of desert monks (the *Apophthegmata patrum*), to hagiography (the *Life of Antony*), to travel accounts (the

third and fourth centuries in response to increased raids by sub-Saharan tribes (a hypothesis to which I shall return): "Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi nella cultura tardoimperiale," in *IV Congresso internazionale di Studi etiopici (Roma, 10-15 aprile 1972)*, Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura, 2 vols. (Rome, 1974), 1:141-93; "Il negro buono e il negro malvagio nel mondo classico," in *Conoscenze etniche e rapporti di convivenza nell'antichità*, ed. M. Sordi, Contributi dell'Istituto di storia antica 6 (Milan, 1979), 108-35; "Intolerance: Equal and Less Equal in the Roman World," *Classical Philology* 82 (1987): 187-205. In her presentation of the sources concerning Abba Moses, Kathleen O'Brien Wicker suggested that the "dualistic theology" enacted by the ascetic "intensified" the "attitudes about color discrimination" in Egypt ("Ethiopian Moses [Collected Sources]," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush [Minneapolis, 1990], 329-48, at 334).

⁵Lloyd Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture 2 (Norman, OK, 1989).

⁶One early and successful exception: P. Basilius Steidle, "Der 'schwarze kleine Knabe' in der alten Möncherzählung," *Benediktinische Monatschrift* 34 (1958): 339-50.

⁷Vincent Wimbush, "Ascetic Behavior and Colorful Language: Stories about Ethiopian Moses," *Semeia* 58 (1992): 81-92.

⁸Gay Byron, "Piety, Politics, and Ideology: The Use of Ethiopians in Late Antique Monastic Literature" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, November 1999). See also her *Blackened by Their Sins: Early Christian Ethno-Political Rhetorics about Egyptians, Ethiopians, Blacks, and Blackness* (London, forthcoming).

Historia Monachorum and the *Lausiac History*), to discursive treatises on the ascetic life (John Cassian's *Conferences*). Everyone, it seems, knew that demons could appear as Ethiopians. On the other hand, among the countless discussions of demons in this literature, the number of such appearances is relatively small. For example, out of the hundreds of surviving *apophthegmata*, many of which refer to demons and their appearances, fewer than ten mention Ethiopian demons.⁹ In the *Life of Antony*, the black demon appears only once: otherwise, the demons appear as animals or in forms not marked by color, and Antony's long discourse on demons does not mention their blackness. The literature, then, does not simply equate the demonic with the Ethiopian; there does not appear to have been a concerted effort to use demonology to segregate or ostracize Ethiopians from monastic life. Rather, Ethiopianness is invoked in specific instances in order to say something about the demonic. But to say what? Why was it considered meaningful or useful at certain moments in monastic discourse to Ethiopianize the demonic?

Posing the question in this way draws on Homi Bhabha's analysis of racial stereotyping in colonial discourse:

My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. To judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*, with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized).¹⁰

I find Bhabha's work suggestive rather than immediately applicable to my question. After all, monasticism was not colonialism, nor is it clear that wider Greco-Roman discourse about the Ethiopian can be readily labeled "colonial" according to Bhabha's definition,¹¹ which itself has been criticized as too abstract and therefore descriptive of no actual colonial situation.¹² Still, Bhabha may have much to offer to an analysis of the demonic in general and the Ethiopian demon in particular, since his "concern is to demonstrate an ambivalence in colonial and colonizing subjects by articulating the inner dissension within a colonial discourse structured accord-

⁹See Boniface Ramsey, ed. and trans., *John Cassian: The Conferences*, Ancient Christian Writers 57 (New York, 1997), 73.

¹⁰Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), 67, emphasis in original.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 70–71.

¹²Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government* (Princeton, 1994), 39–59.

ing to the conflictual economy of the psyche.”¹³ Stories about demons invite a cultural analysis that does not eschew psychoanalytic concepts such as repression and projection: “the builder of the *other* and, in the final analysis, of the *strange* is indeed repression itself and its perviousness.”¹⁴ Thus, what has been construed as a weakness in Bhabha’s work—“its construction in universalized psychoanalytic terms”¹⁵—emerges as its strength in this case. In a sense, my analysis needs to follow Bhabha in reverse: while he uses the (Lacanian) development of the self through identification and disavowal to understand how racial stereotyping facilitated colonial domination, I want to understand how an ethnic or somatic stereotype that was developed in a discourse of sociopolitical domination (if not outright colonialism) facilitated the development of the ascetic self. This approach, in accord with recent scholarship, situates the seemingly repressive aspect of ascetic behavior within a creative program intended to produce “a new subjectivity.”¹⁶

This focus on the productive, self-formative dimension of asceticism owes much to Michel Foucault’s analysis of early Christian monasticism as a “technology of the self,” a regime that permitted “individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”¹⁷ Elizabeth A. Clark and others have appreciatively criticized and modified Foucault’s treatment of the self and sexuality in early Christian materials at several points,¹⁸ but my study of the Ethiopian demon will circle around one particular element of Foucault’s work: his identification of the guide-disciple relationship as the

¹³Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, 1990), 145.

¹⁴Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, 1991), 184, emphasis in original; cf. G. R. Dunstan and R. F. Hobson, “A Note on an Early Ingredient of Racial Prejudice in Western Europe,” *Race* 6 (1965): 334–39; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999), 7–9.

¹⁵Thomas, 47.

¹⁶Richard Valantasis, “Constructions of Power in Asceticism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (1995): 775–821.

¹⁷Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst, MA, 1988), 16–49, at 18. See also the essays collected in Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (New York, 1999). Foucault’s work makes an explicit contribution to Valantasis’s performance approach to asceticism in “Constructions of Power.”

¹⁸Elizabeth A. Clark, “Foucault, the Fathers, and Sex,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56 (1988): 619–41; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), esp. 1–4; Conrad Leyser, “Masculinity in Flux: Nocturnal Emission and the Limits of Celibacy in the Early Middle Ages,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. M. Hadley (London, 1999), 103–20; Virginia Burrus, “*Begot-ten, Not Made*”: *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, 2000), esp. 167–70.

primary social context in which speaking of one's sexuality produced knowledge of the self.¹⁹ Foucault was right to point to this relationship, but he usually subordinated it to his overall emphasis on self-examination or *exomologesis*, verbalization of one's thoughts or desires, as the distinctively Christian technology of the self: the monastic disciple's obedience to his elder became simply an example of the larger phenomenon.²⁰ He paid little attention to how the guide-disciple relationship itself was formed or what role eroticism may have played in it.²¹ Here the more flexible analysis of homoerotic desire or of homosocial bonds made possible by subsequent queer theory (itself indebted to Foucault) will prove helpful.²² Moreover, because he relied primarily on the works of John Cassian, Foucault treated the demonic rarely and then as only a symbolization of thoughts, underestimating the extent to which the monks considered the demons active impediments to their self-forming discipline.²³ In Bhabha's language, it remains to explore the "effectivity" of the demonic in the construction of the monastic subject.

My study of the "effectivity" of the Ethiopian in early Christian monastic literature, the processes of ascetic subjectification that it made possible, proceeds in three increasingly complicated steps. These steps do not precisely correspond to a chronological development in the image of the Ethiopian; rather, they reconstruct the cultural logic that lay behind the image. First, on the most basic level, the blackness of the demon, by providing an unmistakable sign of evil, could clarify an ambiguous situation, enable renunciation of temptation, and display a monk's gift of discernment. Second, as the demon became Ethiopian and not merely black, it took on the stereotype of hypersexuality associated with the Ethiopian somatic type in Greco-Roman culture. Embodying and externalizing the simultaneously

¹⁹For example, Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 44–45.

²⁰So in *ibid.*; see too the reference to "confession to others" as nearly an afterthought in Foucault's analysis of self-examination in John Cassian in his "The Battle for Chastity," in *Religion and Culture*, 188–97, at 196.

²¹Foucault's comment that "there is very little mention of homosexual relations" in monastic literature is true enough ("Sexuality and Solitude," in *Religion and Culture*, 182–87, at 187) but ignores more subtle intimations of homoeroticism.

²²For example, see the "four prehomosexual categories of male sex and gender deviance" explored by David Halperin in his "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," *GLQ* 6 (2000): 87–123, especially his category of "friendship." See below for the utility of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of the "erotic triangle" (*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* [New York, 1985]) to understanding certain demonic appearances.

²³So Clark, "Foucault, the Fathers, and Sex," 636–37. In one of his few more than passing references to Satan or demons, Foucault writes this of Cassian's thought: "Fourth, this reality which is able to hide in my thoughts is a power, a power which is not of another nature than my soul, as is, for instance, the body. The power which hides inside my thoughts, this power is of the same nature of my thoughts and of my soul. It is the Devil. It is the presence of someone else in me" ("The Hermeneutics of the Self," in *Religion and Culture*, 158–81, at 177, n. 44).

attractive and repellent power of the self's erotic desire at a moment of crisis, the demon facilitated the formation of a more secure monastic identity, conceptualized in patrilineal terms ("father" or "son"). Finally, the ambiguity of the Ethiopian, whose nature was both fixed by stereotyping (demon) and transformable by ascetic practice (Moses), exemplified an ambivalence about the intractable yet reformable human self that lay at the heart of the monastic project. The presence of wider cultural stereotypes about the Ethiopian in ascetic literature exposes the hybridity of a discourse that both its participants and its interpreters have at times portrayed as entirely separate (withdrawn) from dominant cultural formations. Ascetic discourse, like all cultures, is "encumbered, or entangled and overlapping with what used to be regarded as extraneous elements."²⁴

BLACKNESS AND VISUAL CLARITY

The origin of the Ethiopian demon is initially to be found, however, in the notion that the Ethiopian's black skin symbolized evil, a seemingly obvious corollary to the use of light or whiteness to symbolize the good.²⁵ God's first creative act in the Bible was to separate the light from the darkness: "God saw that the light was good" (Gen. 1:3–4). In the earliest surviving piece of Christian literature, 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells his followers, "You are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5). In Revelation, virtuous Christians are dressed in white robes (6:11, 7:13, etc.). From here it was a short step to identifying the devil and evil persons as not merely darkness but black. Thus, in the second century, the *Epistle of Barnabas* refers to the devil as "the black one" without any hint that readers would not know who is meant, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* portrays the Church as a tower, the black stones of which are discarded.²⁶ The devil or demons begin to appear as black figures, sometimes with specific ethnic identities that were seen to involve black skin, not just Ethiopians but, ironically enough in our context, Egyptians.²⁷ Since the ancients understood there to be a sliding scale of skin color, ranging between the similarly undesirable extremes of the very light (northern barbarians) and the very dark (Ethiopians), some precision was possible: a disciple of Peter dreams of "a most evil-looking woman, who looked like an Ethiopian, not an Egyptian, but was all black."²⁸ The Egyptian, then, stood between the Ethiopian, whose truly black skin defined one end of the spectrum, and the unmarked ideal somatic type, whose skin was neither too dark nor too

²⁴Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), 317.

²⁵Franz Joseph Dölger, *Die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit und der Schwarze: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Taufgelöbnis*, 2d ed. (Münster, 1971), 49–83.

²⁶*Epistle of Barnabas* 4:10, 20:1; *Shepherd of Hermas*, Vision 9:8.

²⁷Frost, 4–5.

²⁸*Acts of Peter* 22.

light. Not surprisingly, then, when the “in-between” Egyptians did the talking, they used Ethiopians as exemplars of blackness and thus of sin.²⁹

Most Christian discussion of Ethiopians or black people was exegetical, and here the notion that black skin symbolized the sin that Christian grace removed was pervasive, epitomized in the declaration of Solomon’s bride (i.e., the human soul): “I am black and beautiful” (Song of Sol. 1:5).³⁰ This basic use of blackness (evil, sin) as the negative opposite of brightness (good, virtue) appears in a monastic saying preserved in Armenian: “Abba Avita saw a dragon that had penetrated into the desert; a black was seated on it. He heard a voice that said, ‘Darkness has come into the desert, and the sun of righteousness has departed.’ He understood that the works of excellence had become lacking in the desert.”³¹ This saying deploys the clarity of blackness to criticize a decline in monastic virtue from the early days (a frequent theme). In the process, it commends the otherwise obscure Abba Avita as possessing the insight to see the deterioration in ascetic excellence of which its present practitioners were unaware.

Several monastic stories likewise use a demon’s blackness to mark as clearly demonic an otherwise ambiguous or puzzling action or problem. For example, John Cassian reports how John of Lycopolis took on an extremely harsh regime of fasting but gave it up when the devil appeared to him “in the form of a black Ethiopian,” saying, “It was I who inflicted this labor on you”; thus it was revealed to John that his “exaggerated abstinence” was a demonic deception.³² In another Cassian story, an elder convinces a young monk to stop his obsessive physical labors after he sees an Ethiopian working beside the younger man and urging him on.³³ According to Rufinus, Macarius of Alexandria received the gift of seeing the demonic at work in monastic worship services: the diverse virtues of the praying monks were apparent in how they responded to the “little black Ethiopian boys” that harassed them and that were visible only to Macarius.³⁴ Likewise, Gregory the Great reports that no one in a monastery understood why one monk could never make it through the prayers: Benedict himself was summoned, and he alone was

²⁹Cf. Robert A. Orsi, “The Religious Boundaries of an In-Between People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920–1990,” in *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*, ed. Robert A. Orsi, Religion in North America (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 257–88.

³⁰Jean-Marie Courtès, “The Theme of ‘Ethiopia’ and ‘Ethiopians’ in Patristic Literature,” in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, 3 vols. in 4 (Cambridge, MA, 1979), vol. 2, pt. 1, 9–32.

³¹Lucien Regnault, *Les Sentences des pères du désert: Nouveau recueil: Apophtegmes inédits ou peu connus*, 2d ed. (Solesmes, 1977), 271.

³²John Cassian *Conferences* 1.21.1 (SC 42:105; Ramsey, 61–62).

³³Cassian *Conferences* 9.6.1 (SC 54:45–46).

³⁴*Historia Monachorum* 29.4 (Eva Schulz-Flügel, ed., *Tyrannius Rufinus: Historia Monachorum sive de Vita Sanctorum Patrum* [Berlin, 1990], 371–74).

able to see a black boy tugging at the monk's cloak during worship.³⁵ The appearance of the black boy makes clear what is otherwise ambiguous. Is a more severe fasting regime a good idea? Why would an otherwise good monk have such problems in church? A second important point of these stories is to portray the monk who sees the black demon as possessing the gift of "discernment of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10): he can see demonic influence where others cannot. The blackness of the demons, by providing an unmistakable sign of evil at work, confirms the clarity of vision given to the "man of God."³⁶ Already there is an element of projection: the clarity that appears in the demon's black skin represents not only the unambiguous nature of evil but also the discerning insight that belongs to the monk who sees the demon.

The devil's appearance as a black boy in the *Life of Antony*, the earliest datable appearance of a black (or Ethiopian) demon in monastic literature (ca. 357), belongs squarely in this tradition but augments it with themes of sexuality and power. The context is erotic temptation, which Athanasius calls "the weapons of the belly's navel" (Job 40:16) and presents as a problem peculiar to "the young."³⁷ The devil's sexual attack follows a doubled pattern: first, suggestions of "dirty thoughts," unsuccessful, lead to the appearance of a woman, whose color is not mentioned; then "thoughts" of "the ease of pleasure," unsuccessful, lead to the appearance of the black boy. The boy parallels the woman as an erotic temptation but with a difference: he is a representation of evil both more accurate and more powerful than the woman. Athanasius presents the devil's female appearance as deceptive, not revelatory of the devil's nature: "The wretched devil dared at night even to dress up like a woman and to imitate one in every way merely to deceive Antony."³⁸ In contrast, the black boy represents the devil's true nature: "As if he were beside himself, he finally appeared to Antony in form [*phantasia*] as he is in his mind [*nous*], as a black boy."³⁹ In Athanasius's view, the mind or rational faculty was the location of the self's true nature.⁴⁰ The form of the black boy reveals that, as Antony tells the devil, "you are black in your mind and as weak as a boy."⁴¹ That is, the devil is evil (black) and powerless (boy). But the revelatory appearance of the black boy makes clear not only the devil's evil but also Antony's virtue: it is his amazingly steadfast resistance to temptation that forced this clarifying appearance.

³⁵Gregory the Great *Dialogues* 2.4.

³⁶Steidle, 339–41.

³⁷Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 5.3 (SC 400:142–44).

³⁸Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 5.5 (SC 400:144).

³⁹Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 6.1 (SC 400:146).

⁴⁰Athanasius *Contra gentes* 2–4, 26 (Robert W. Thomson, ed., *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* [Oxford, 1971], 6–12, 68–70); *Vita Antonii* 20.5–7, 45.2 (SC 400:188–90, 256).

⁴¹Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 6.4 (SC 400:148).

Athanasius's explicit symbolism of the black boy relies, however, on the implicit identification of evil/blackness as powerful, specifically, erotically powerful. The boy's speech asserts his power over all monks other than Antony:

And as though he had fallen down, he no longer attacked Antony with thoughts—for the crafty one had been tossed down—but finally he used a human voice and said, "Many people I have deceived, and most I have defeated, but now coming against you and your efforts as I have against others, I have been weakened." Antony asked, "Who are you who say such things to me?" Immediately he answered with a pitiful voice, "It is I who am fornication's lover. It is I who have been entrusted with its ambushes and its titillations against the youth, and I am called the spirit of fornication. How many persons who desired to be prudent I have deceived! How many persons who professed to be so I have persuaded to change by titillating them! It is I [*egô eimi*] on whose account even the prophet blames those who have fallen, saying, 'You have been deceived by the spirit of fornication' (Hos. 4:12). For it was through me that they were tripped up. It is I [*egô eimi*] who so often troubled you and who as often was overthrown by you."⁴²

Using the inflated egocentric language of Isis aretologies and Johannine discourses, the boy claims a power that his small stature and weak voice belie. Athanasius invests great strength in the demon of fornication, only to divest it of that power in the face of Antony's strength, a divestment represented by the demon's being a boy. The power of the black demon of fornication is contained or constrained by a feminized appearance: the devil may not be a woman, but he does have gender, that of the feminized boy.

But the power of the spirit of fornication actually does not reside in the demon itself; rather, it is the projected strength or irresistibility of the monk's attraction to the erotic object, whether woman or boy. The black demon externalizes the monk's experience within himself of a seemingly irresistible desire: "It is I who *am* fornication's lover," the demon states, "... and I am *called* the spirit of fornication." The demon's split personality, so to speak—both fornication's lover and fornication itself—embodies a split within the tempted monk, whose will is weak in the face of his erotic desire. The ancients often imagined the passion of eros not as originating within themselves but as an invasive demonic force or disease whose attractive pull left them feeling powerless.⁴³ Antony, in contrast, is strong, filled with "courage"; through him the demon is "overthrown," and Antony's own erotic desire is rendered "as weak as a boy." But Athanasius deflects

⁴²Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 6.1–3 (SC 400:146–48).

⁴³Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 43–49; Ruth Padel, *In and Out of Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, 1992), 114–37.

this investment of power in the monk onto Christ: "This was Antony's first struggle against the devil, or rather this was the achievement in Antony of the Savior, who 'condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit' (Rom. 8:3–4)."⁴⁴ Athanasius consistently subordinates the psychological drama of ascetic temptation to the larger drama of Christ's victory over Satan and the demons (or pagan gods); thus, the black boy is identified—confusingly to readers familiar with later, more precise demonological literature—as a demon, the spirit of fornication, and an appearance of the devil himself.

THE STEREOTYPE OF THE ETHIOPIAN: DEMONIC HYPERSEXUALITY AND MONASTIC SONS

Athanasius's black boy demon was not (yet) Ethiopian, but the associations that coalesced into the Ethiopian demon were already present. The black demon embodied an eroticized power, a temptation of such force that at times it had to be represented as feminized or miniaturized. When the visual form of the black demon gained more precise definition as Ethiopian, it acquired the stereotypical traits associated with the Ethiopian body type that circulated through Greco-Roman culture, especially hypersexuality. The Ethiopian's stereotypical hypersexuality made the demon an effective means of representing erotic desire in a manner that could be renounced.

In his comprehensive work, *Romans and Blacks*, Lloyd Thompson has shown that Romans did not think of Ethiopians in terms that we would call racial but as a (barbarian) nation or people or as a somatic type. Both conceptions attributed to the Ethiopian a degree of power that they simultaneously denied. As an at times mythical nation, the Ethiopians were seen as mighty and noble warriors but, like all barbarians, vulnerable to the Romans' superior military power.⁴⁵ It is possible that residents of Egypt, more proximate to actual Ethiopians, experienced the Ethiopians as a real military threat in the second and later centuries. A variety of sub-Saharan groups who made violent raids on Egyptian settlements could be subsumed under the category "Ethiopian."⁴⁶ According to the *Historia Monachorum*, incursions by "Ethiopians" against the Thebaid border town of Syene led a nervous Roman general to ask the monk John of Lycopolis whether the general would prevail against them. John assured the general both that he would defeat the Ethiopians and that he would thereby "find favor with the emperors." Then John announced, "The most Christian Emperor Theodosius

⁴⁴Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 7.1–5 (SC 400:150).

⁴⁵Thompson, 88–93.

⁴⁶Cracco Ruggini, "Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi," 173–78; "Il negro buono e il negro malvagio," 120–21.

will die a natural death.”⁴⁷ This scene characterized the Ethiopians as a military threat powerful enough to worry a general and as opponents of the Christian state. While persons elsewhere in the Mediterranean may have been able to romanticize the mythic military power of the Ethiopian people, Egyptians had a more palpable sense of an “Ethiopian” threat and thus were more likely to scapegoat darker-skinned persons in their midst.⁴⁸ And indeed, the anti-ascetic Ethiopian demon was “a product typical of the monastic environments of Egypt,” which was then exported through literature to Syria, Palestine, and western Europe.⁴⁹

Alongside the notion of the Ethiopians as a nation comparable to other barbarian peoples, the Romans thought of the Ethiopian (*Aethiops*) as a somatic type, a kind of body that differed from the somatic norm in several ways, including (but not limited to) skin color.⁵⁰ The Ethiopian was identified as such not because he or she was born from Ethiopians, but because he or she did not visually conform to the Roman ideal:

The ideal somatic type (in respect of the male sex, at any rate) consisted of pale-brown complexion (described as *inter nigrum et palladium* or the mean between the extremes of *Aethiops* blackness and “nordic” whiteness), straight (but not large) nose, moist, bright eyes of a brown colour midway between jet blackness and pale-brown, brown hair (of a texture midway between the straight and the tightly-curved, and between excessive softness and excessive coarseness), lips neither thin nor thick, and moderate tallness.⁵¹

With his black skin, flat nose, and curly hair, the Ethiopian deviated from this norm, as did the Nordic type, the “paleface” (*candidus* or *flavus*). The mode of categorization was not what we would call racial; rather, it was “purely and simply a matter of the observer’s optical registration of somatic distance or of the somatic norm, uninfluenced by the facts of the observed person’s biological descent, and uncomplicated by any ideologically operative link with social role or social distance.”⁵²

But this categorizing was complicated by an ideologically operative link with *moral* distance. The ancient pseudoscience of physiognomy claimed to be able to read quality of character from the appearance of the body. Not surprisingly, physical characteristics associated with the

⁴⁷*Historia Monachorum* 1.2 (André-Jean Festugière, ed., *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto: Edition critique du texte grec et traduction annotée*, Subsidia Hagiographica 53 [Brussels, 1971], 9–10).

⁴⁸Cracco Ruggini, “Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi,” 160–62; “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 119–20; “Intolerance,” 194–95; Thompson, 96–100.

⁴⁹Cracco Ruggini, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 131–33.

⁵⁰Thompson, 62–85.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 105.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 77.

somatic norm were evaluated positively, while the attributes of the deviant *Aethiops* indicated moral flaws: woolly hair, for example, signified cowardice.⁵³ Hypersexuality was one of the Ethiopian's characteristics and carried with it Roman anxieties about legitimacy and power.⁵⁴ A popular declamation exercise on the statement "matrona Aethiopem peperit" [a Roman married woman has given birth to an Ethiopian] and frequent jokes in the satirists suggested that Roman women were wont to have sex with erotically powerful Ethiopians. However few liaisons between Roman women and Ethiopian men were in actual fact, the possibility was a shorthand way to express Roman male anxieties about the legitimacy of their sons and thus about Roman identity, understood in patrilineal terms. The appearance of an Ethiopian child made manifest adulterous behavior (at least in the form of a "mental impression" entertained by the woman during sex) that might otherwise have gone undetected.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, images of macrophallic and ithyphallic black men in baths and other places believed to be sites of magical or demonic attack were most likely apotropaic: the erotic power of the hypersexual Ethiopian was harnessed to turn back hostile supernatural forces.⁵⁶ Representations of female Ethiopians marked hypersexuality with large breasts.⁵⁷ The disturbing sexual power of the Ethiopian, located and visually marked in him or her as a body rather than as a member of a social group, threatened to disrupt genealogical order and had (anti)demonic force.

As I have said, nonmonastic Christian authors discussed Ethiopians nearly exclusively in exegetical contexts, explicating references to Ethiopians in biblical passages. Like Christians of later periods, these authors basically thought of others such as the Ethiopians "in religious rather than racial or national" terms: they were potential Christians.⁵⁸ But Christian ruminations about the pre-Christian pagan character of the Ethiopian at times drew on prevailing stereotypes to create a similarly eroticized picture. In general, the frequent references to the chastity of biblical Ethiopians suggested that they had overcome their characteristic hypersexuality.⁵⁹ For example, Christian authors insisted that the Queen of Sheba's visit to

⁵³Ibid., 104–9.

⁵⁴Ibid., 107–8.

⁵⁵Cf. Elliott, 37–40.

⁵⁶John Clarke, "Hypersexual Black Men in Augustan Baths: Ideal Somatotypes and Apotropaic Magic," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. Natalie B. Kampen (Cambridge, 1996), 184–98; John Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley, 1998), 119–42.

⁵⁷Thompson, 108–9.

⁵⁸Thomas, 72–77. Thomas stresses how in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the evangelical impulse of Christian missionaries contested the essentializing racism of governmental or corporate colonizers, often by infantilizing natives as pagan "children" that could be made Christian "men" (105–42).

⁵⁹Thompson, 108–9.

Solomon was entirely chaste, a quest for wisdom only, and that the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip (Acts 8:26–40) exemplified the “defeat of the libido.”⁶⁰ The converted Ethiopian’s sexual self-control demonstrated the depth of transformation that accompanied the turn to the biblical God. But the exegetical Ethiopian could become the site for the resolution of anxieties both sexual and genealogical. Didymus the Blind offers a good example, since he worked in Alexandria at the intersection of Egyptian Christianity’s monastic, episcopal, and scholarly cultures: he deployed the sexualized Ethiopian in his construction of an orthodox male identity, symbolized genealogically.

For Didymus, biblical Ethiopians represent pagans, potential Christians. Interpreting Psalm 86:3–4, Didymus identifies “Tyre and the nation of the Ethiopians” with “impiety and worship of demons” and “idolatry.”⁶¹ Didymus’s most extensive treatment of Ethiopians is inspired by Zechariah 9:13: “I have bent you, Judah, for myself as a bow; I have filled Ephraim; and I will raise up your children, Zion, against the children of the Greeks, and I will handle you as a warrior’s sword.” Writing in 387, after decades of Christian strife over christological heresies,⁶² Didymus uses this verse to construct Christ’s identity as divine (“See the surprising thing: the same Savior is bow, archer, and arrow”)⁶³ and the Christian’s identity as orthodox and male. Didymus contrasts the “sharpened arrows” of the heretics, which are their words, “full of harmful poison, killing those who receive them,” with the arrows of the Savior, “which place divine love in those who are struck by them, so that the divine bride who has the blessed love says, ‘I am wounded with love’ (Song of Sol. 2:5).”⁶⁴ Citing Psalm 44:4–5 (“Gird your sword upon your thigh, powerful one . . . and your right hand shall guide you wonderfully”), Didymus asks, “How does the right hand not guide wonderfully the powerful one who has girded [his sword] upon his thigh, striking in a surprising way those who are struck with his blows?”⁶⁵ These thoughts on divine striking lead Didymus to the wounded “Ethiopians” of Zephaniah 2:12:

Therefore, one hears him say to those who are taken by surprise by his divine power, “You, Ethiopians, are wounded by my sword” (Zeph. 2:12). For, having been wounded by the one saying these things, and having cast aside the life of Ethiopians, they will receive immortality, so that they say in thanksgiving, “Let the brightness of the Lord our God be upon us” (Ps. 89[90]:17), since, having been washed clean by the author of all goods, we have been shown to be bright and

⁶⁰Courtès, 22, with references.

⁶¹Didymus the Blind *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.83 (SC 84:658–60).

⁶²See SC 83:23–27.

⁶³Didymus the Blind *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.190 (SC 84:710).

⁶⁴Didymus the Blind *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.188–89 (SC 84:708–10).

⁶⁵Didymus the Blind *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.194 (SC 84:712).

white, according to the one who speaks with boldness, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 50[51]:9). How is it that they became “Ethiopians,” those who are wounded by the good so that they might die to impiety? Is it not because they have been born from the devil (cf. John 8:44) and want to perform his desires [*epithumiai*]? For it is said concerning him that he is black because of the dark ignorance and evil attaching [to him], as it is made clear in the Book of Repentance, called *The Shepherd*, and in the *Epistle of Barnabas*. But let us, even we ourselves, be struck salvifically by the living and active Word, concerning which it is written, “The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), so that, having died to the flesh, we might be made alive to the Spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). Let us be wounded by the “choice shaft” (Isa. 49:2), sent from the bent bow, for thus we shall be raised up, becoming children of Zion against the offspring of the Greeks.⁶⁶

In Didymus’s highly eroticized account of salvation, “Ethiopians” are pagan idolaters, children of the devil, eager to do his desires (*epithumiai*), black from ignorance and sin, flesh; “we” are Christians, children of Zion, filled with the divine love (*erôs*), white from divine washing, spirit. The transformation from “Ethiopian” to “white” comes with being “wounded by the choice shaft,” a salvific penetration that fosters divine *erôs* and engenders “children of Zion.” These “children of Zion,” in turn, are male: they are “ecclesiastical men [*ekklēsiastikoi andres*], who have turned back the contentious words” of “the children of the Greeks,” that is, the heretics.⁶⁷

Didymus locates the Ethiopian at the intersection of two highly charged oppositions, which he imagines in sexual and genealogical terms: pagan vs. Christian, heretic vs. orthodox. As Virginia Burrus has described for his Alexandrian contemporary Athanasius, Didymus authorizes orthodox faith in the divine Father and Son by a patrilineal succession of human fathers and sons.⁶⁸ In Didymus’s construction, the black and fleshly Ethiopian embodies the idolatry and carnal desires that Christians have abandoned for truth and divine love; perversely, they wish to perform the desires of the father from whom they are born. The choice shaft’s wounding of this offspring of Satan, his diabolical genealogy made manifest in his black skin, raises up children of Zion, orthodox men, to oppose children of the Greeks, heretics. Anxieties about proper and improper desire and about legitimate and illegitimate children meet in the Ethiopian, who plays the sexualized role of the bad son in a queer drama whose climax is the engendering of legitimate “ecclesiastical men.”

⁶⁶Didymus the Blind *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.195–97 (SC 84:712–14), cf. 4.312 (SC 85:964).

⁶⁷Didymus the Blind *Commentary on Zechariah* 3.198 (SC 84:714).

⁶⁸Burrus, esp. 47–68.

Of course, it is a drama in which “we” participate: “we” are not Ethiopians but once were. But the Ethiopian, although wounded, cannot be dead, for Didymus and his readers’ identity as white, as children of Zion and ecclesiastical men, depends on the continued negative presence of the fleshly black. Textually, at least, the Ethiopian remains suspended in the moment of wounding.

Precisely these concerns about eroticized power and filial identity circulate through several monastic tales of demons as Ethiopians. That the majority of such appearances are associated with the demon of fornication suggests that the stereotype of hypersexuality attaches to the Ethiopian demon,⁶⁹ although it must be said that in general fornication or erotic temptation (conceptualized as an invasive or attacking force) is more frequently portrayed in demonic terms than are the other passions. But Georgia Frank has demonstrated that monastic literature shared ancient physiognomy’s “notion of a connection between bodily appearance and quality of character,” although monks and their pilgrim viewers tended to narrow their focus to the ascetic’s face.⁷⁰ In particular, a glowing or radiant face revealed “asceticism’s highest achievement, the reversal of the body’s decay and its transformation into the glorified body of the resurrection.”⁷¹ This positive appearance of the bright face could carry with it its negative counterpart. When Paul the Simple visited a monastery, he could see each monk’s “spiritual disposition”: while all the other monks had “sparkling eyes and shining faces, with each one’s angel rejoicing over him,” Paul said, “I see one who is black and his whole body is dark; the demons are standing on each side of him, dominating him, drawing him to them, and leading him by the nose, and his angel, filled with grief, with head bowed, follows him at a distance.” This monk, a fornicator, later repents and loses his dark appearance.⁷² Other stories, in accord with Roman ideology, associate a pleasing body with high social status as well as moral virtue. For example, one monk’s former high social position in the world seems reflected in his being “handsome.”⁷³ The similarly high-born Athanasia, after years of wandering in the desert as a monk, was unrecognizable to her husband because “her beauty had disappeared, to the point that she had the appearance of an Ethiopian.”⁷⁴ These last two vignettes suggest monastic

⁶⁹Thompson, 108–9.

⁷⁰Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 30 (Berkeley, 2000), 134–70.

⁷¹Ibid., 161.

⁷²*Apophthegmata patrum* Paul the Simple 1 (PG 65:381–84; trans. Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, rev. ed. [Kalamazoo, MI, 1984], 205–6).

⁷³*Apophthegmata patrum* Cronius 5 (PG 65:249).

⁷⁴Lucien Regnault, *Les Sentences des pères du désert: Série des anonymes* (Solesmes, 1985), 241.

acceptance not only of the general connection between bodily appearance and moral character but also of the prevailing Greco-Roman somatic norm and the Ethiopian deviance from it.

Therefore, when the visual appearance of a demon was registered as not merely black but Ethiopian, the Ethiopian body's characteristic hypersexuality could augment the clarifying function of blackness so as to signal the presence not just of evil but of specifically sexual evil. In a variation on the stories of discernment of spirits discussed earlier, Abba Daniel of Scetis visits Alexandria and sees a monk entering and leaving the baths. When he confronts the monk with his "scandalizing" behavior, the monk protests his innocence of any wrongdoing, pointedly warning Daniel, "Judge not, and you will not be judged" (Matt. 7:1). But Daniel can see past the monk's veneer of righteousness, as he tells his disciple: "I saw more than fifty demons, which were surrounding him and spreading mud on him. I saw an Ethiopian woman seated on his shoulders who was embracing him tenderly, while another Ethiopian woman, in front of him, dealt with him roughly and was teaching him an indecent act; and all the other demons were accompanying him and rejoicing. But I did not see his angel, neither near to nor far from him; I conclude that it was disgusted by this obscenity." Daniel's insight is confirmed when the monk is caught trying to seduce the wife of an important official, perhaps trying to use the sexual technique taught him by the Ethiopian demon.⁷⁵ These demons, by being Ethiopian, reveal not only that the monk is doing evil but that his evildoing is specifically sexual. The demons' clarifying function relies on the secure physiognomic association of hypersexuality with the Ethiopian.

Another such story, preserved in Greek and Syriac, may depend specifically on the macrophallic image of the Ethiopian.⁷⁶ A monk who entered the desert "as a virgin and totally ignorant of the existence of fornication" is surrounded by demons "in the forms of Ethiopians," who stir up in him the passion of lust. Seeing these Ethiopian "forms," the monk remarks that "the man has this member as a bottle has a neck, to evacuate water. Just as the neck lets pass the water that flows out, so this member evacuates urine from the man." At this statement a rock falls from the roof, and the monk hears a soft voice; Abba Poemen later explains that the rock is the devil and the voice is desire, and the monk is freed from the passion with this knowledge. The monk's speech reveals and ends his virginal innocence (he both can and cannot imagine what other use his penis may have), which overthrows the devil. The viscosity of the Ethiopians, their "forms," enables this change: the story metonymically reduces the Ethiopian form to the penis

⁷⁵Regnault, *Sentences des pères du désert: Nouveau recueil*, 183–85.

⁷⁶N 426 (Regnault, *Sentences des pères du désert: Série des anonymes*, 141); *Apophthegmata patrum* (Syriac) 579 (E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers*, 2 vols. [London, 1907], 2:130). The story has not been published in the original languages, and thus I work from Regnault's French in comparison with Budge's English.

or, rather, enlarges the penis to be the form of the Ethiopian. The Ethiopian form is sexuality, knowledge of which the monk must simultaneously concede and disavow.⁷⁷

Perhaps the most famous appearance of an Ethiopian demon drew on the eroticized power of the Ethiopian to construct male monastic identity as Didymus did male orthodox identity, in genealogical (specifically, patrilineal) terms. This story enjoyed wide circulation in antiquity: it survives in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions and in several different collections. The Greek, closely followed by the Syriac and Latin, reads as follows:

Someone came to Scetis to become a monk, taking with him also his son, who had just been weaned. And when he [the son] became a youth, the demons began to attack him, and he said to his father, "I am returning to the world, for I cannot endure the battle." But his father kept on exhorting him. And again the youth said, "Abba, I cannot stand it any longer. Let me go." His father said to him, "Listen to me, child, just this once. Take for yourself forty measures of bread and palm leaves for forty days' work, and go into the inner desert. Stay there forty days, and let God's will be done." He obeyed his father: he got up and went into the desert, and he stayed there twenty days working, plaiting palm leaves, and eating the dry bread. And behold, he saw the power [*energeia*] coming toward him. For she stood before him as a female Ethiopian, so foul-smelling that he could not bear her odor but chased her away. Therefore, the demon said to him, "It is I who appear sweet in the hearts of people, but on account of your obedience and your labor, God did not permit me to deceive you, but he has revealed to you my foul smell." He got up, gave thanks to God, went to his father, and said to him, "I no longer want to depart, Abba, for I have seen the power and her foul smell." But his father too had been fully informed concerning this and said to the youth, "If you had stayed forty days and kept the command to the end, you would have seen a greater vision."⁷⁸

Although the Ethiopian demon stands at the center of this story, she serves in fact as a kind of third term for the working out of a homosocial relationship/contest between the two men, the youth and his father/abba.⁷⁹ An ambiguity troubles this relationship, signaled by the anonymous narrator's

⁷⁷Cf. Bhabha, 77.

⁷⁸*Apophthegmata patrum* 5.27 (= N 173) (SC 387:262–64). The Syriac is virtually identical, although at the end it has "Now the father knew of a certainty that the young man had been satisfied in his mind on the subject, and he said to his son, 'Hadst thou remained . . .'" (580 [Budge, 2:130–31]). Likewise, the Latin is identical, although it identifies the woman as "foul-smelling and ugly" (*Verba seniorum* 5.23 [PL 73:879]).

⁷⁹See Sedgwick. The "erotic triangle" can be "a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment" (27).

identification of the older man as the youth's (biological) "father" (*patér*) and the youth's address of him as his (monastic) "abba" (*abbas*). This odd couple—biological father and son and yet monastic elder and disciple—unsettles the customary monastic oppositions of world and desert, biological family and ascetic community, by collapsing the metaphorical monastic father-son relationship into the literal. The disciple/son's disobedient desire to return to the world challenges the elder/father's attempt to recast their biological relationship into the ascetic mold. The youth's obedience is rewarded with a clarifying vision, the Ethiopian demon, a prize whose value the older man deflates with his final assertion of authority. The father/elder comes out on top, for the youth's obedience is revealed to be incomplete, his boast vain, his vision inferior to what he could have achieved. Like Didymus's wounded Ethiopians, the female demon precipitates the engendering of a new male genealogy that remakes the son into a disciple and the father into an elder.

The Ethiopian demon enables this restructuring of the male-male relationship through a simultaneous representation of the power and the danger of the erotic pull that must be sublimated for the creation of this homosocial bond. As tempting as it is to read the demon's foul smell as constitutive of her Ethiopianness, in fact the story explicitly separates the demon's visibility as Ethiopian from her aromaticness as foul. What the youth sees (not smells), the narrative insists, is "the power" (*energeia*), a term that serves in the *Sayings* as shorthand for the demonic, especially fornication, as that which moves, pulls, attracts, impels the monk into evil activity.⁸⁰ The Ethiopian demon is eroticized power: her speech mimics that of Athanasius's black boy in its grandiose Johannine diction: "It is I who appear sweet in the hearts of people." The usually macrophallic hypersexuality of the Ethiopian male is rendered feminine, grammatically to match the gender of *energeia* (a feminine noun in Greek), narratively to suit the presumed sexual interests of the youth, and symbolically to oppose the homosocial bonding with the elder/father that erotic desire thwarts. The foul odor of the demon is revealed by God to the youth because of his "obedience" and "labor": the revulsion it inspires is the youth's reward for having obeyed the elder/father for twenty days. The strength of the youth's desire for the Ethiopian's sweetness necessitates the use of stench to create revulsion, a strategy that the monks (and the women they pursue!) use elsewhere and that implies a connection between stench and women.⁸¹ Like Antony's encounter with the black boy, the appearance of the Ethiopian demon to the youth provides a moment of clarity: this is what so relentlessly attracts him and what he must renounce if the youth is to become his father's disciple and not just his son.

⁸⁰ *Apophthegmata patrum* 5.30, 32, 42 (SC 387:266, 270, 282).

⁸¹ *Apophthegmata patrum* 5.26 (= N 172) (SC 387:262); N 52 (*Revue de l'orient chrétien* 12 [1907]: 179); Arsenius 18 (PG 65:92). Of these, the first two associate stench with women; the last, with the pleasures of the world in general.

This reading acquires additional force when the Greek version is compared with the Ethiopic, in which the biological father-son relationship is either absent or unmentioned. Here the narrative is transmitted under the name of a Joseph of Aphramet who tells the story in the first person, which some scholars would see as a sign that this version is closer to oral tradition and thus more original than the Greek parallel.⁸² Like the Greek son/disciple, Joseph tells his “father,” who is *not* identified as his biological father, that he wishes to return to the world because of “fornication.” Although Joseph says that his father “was very understanding” during his battle with temptation, he presents his intention to depart as a crisis in the elder-disciple relationship: “Fornication attacked me,” Joseph says, “every day, while I remained with my father,” and he wished to return to the world “and take a wife like any man.” Without the ambiguity of the biological father-son relationship, this version constructs a straightforward competition between wife and abba for the disciple’s allegiance. Similarly commanded to work alone for forty days, Joseph reports that after twenty days

a black and small girl [*filia nigra et parva*] came to me, inside where I was sitting, and said to me, “You don’t know me, do you?” I said, “No.” And she said to me, “You are in all these labors because of me.” And for my part I said to her, “Thus, you are fornication.” She said to me, “Of course.” I said to her, “If you are indeed fornication and you are so foul, then stop condemning me.” She said to me, “It is I who wanted to appear to you in this way because you are a man of the Lord [*homo Domini*]. Those who say, ‘We are pillars’ (cf. Gal. 2:9), I have cast down.” With this discourse completed, she disappeared, and I saw her no longer. I got up and went into the region of Egypt to my father and remained with him three days. He would not speak to me but was doing everything that he used to do. I did not understand. Later he said to me, “What you have seen, tell me, lest anything be hidden from me; for whatever things you have seen, they have been revealed to me.” And he kissed my face and my head several times and said to me, “Behold, today you have been made my son [*hodie factus es filius meus*]” (cf. Ps. 2:7; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5, 5:5). And he [Joseph] said, From that day I was at rest from fornication.⁸³

If the Greek version presents the transformation of a biological son into an ascetic disciple, this version presents the transformation of an ascetic disciple into a metaphorical son. By renouncing the “black and small” *filia*, Joseph has become a *filius* (at least in the Latin translation). In this Ethiopic text, fornication is not Ethiopian but “black and small” and no less “foul.” What marks the girl’s foulness? Her small stature? Her black

⁸²Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford, 1993), 21.

⁸³*Apophthegmata patrum* (Ethiopic) 14.27 (Victor Arras, *Collectio Monastica* [Louvain, 1963], 84–85). I use Arras’s Latin translation.

skin? It is not clear, but the power of this demon remains: she casts down those monks who claim to be “pillars,” deflating their erect egos, and reveals her foul nature to the humble, obedient Joseph, the “man of the Lord.” The elder here does not rebuke Joseph for staying only twenty days, instead commending complete self-disclosure to the elder, a quality as essential as obedience to the success of the guide-disciple relationship.

I have interpreted this Ethiopic version as, unlike all three other versions, not identifying Joseph’s “father” as his biological father; but in fact there is an ambiguity in the text that emerges through comparison with the parallels. In the Greek, Latin, and Syriac, the father and son have lived for many years in the monastic settlements of Scetis, and the son is sent to “the inner desert” for his encounter with the demon. In contrast, the Ethiopic has the father tell Joseph to “remain in Scetis” for his forty days of labor, and when Joseph returns to his father, it is “to the region of Egypt” that he goes. This language suggests that Joseph and his father reside not in the monastic settlements of Scetis but in the settled land (“Egypt”) and thus that perhaps his father is indeed his (biological) father. On the other hand, in his request to leave, Joseph says he wishes to go “ad saeculum” [to the world], and his father labels marriage a “sin.” Although its first-person narration suggests it may be the earliest version of the story, Joseph’s account may conceal what the later versions reveal, masking the filial turmoil that he must have felt at his father’s statement, “Today you have been made my son.”

In any event, the demon of fornication is Ethiopian here, I have argued, to bring a moment of clarity to a homosocial monastic relationship marked by ambiguity and ambivalence. This function builds on the simple clarifying effect of blackness that we saw in other stories. By her Ethiopianness (and not merely her blackness), the demon reveals the power of the erotic pull away from the ascetic master and embodies an extreme alterity that enables clarification of identity. The young monk’s renunciation of the Ethiopianized demon enables the establishment of his new identity as son/disciple. But the alterity that the Ethiopian embodies originates within the monk’s self: she is a projection of the monk’s own erotic desire, which was in full operation before the appearance of the demon. It is “the archaic, narcissistic self, not yet demarcated by the outside world,” that “projects out of itself what it experiences as dangerous or unpleasant in itself, making of it an alien *double*, uncanny and demoniacal.”⁸⁴ The clearly marked alterity of the Ethiopian demon facilitates the othering of a dimension of the self that the unformed monk must renounce.

Two more stories follow this pattern of (1) disruption or crisis in a monastic relationship (caused by temptation); (2) encounter with an Ethiopian; (3) reconstitution of the relationship on a more advanced basis. In one, Heraclius tells the story of a disciple who lived in obedience to his elder for

⁸⁴Kristeva, 183, emphasis in original.

years, “but one day he was attacked and made prostration before the old man, saying, ‘Make me become a monk.’” The demonic attack here is not fornication but the temptation to abandon discipline under the elder for the life of complete solitude prematurely.⁸⁵ The elder helps the disciple construct a cell a mile away and instructs him to stay there at first only a short time and with a light discipline: “When you are hungry, eat, drink, sleep, only do not come out of your cell until Saturday; then come to me.” But the disciple continues to be tempted to do more than what he is capable of: “The brother spent two days according to the commandment, and on the third day, struck with *accidie*, he said, ‘Why did the old man create this for me?’ And he got up and sang many Psalms, and after sunset he ate. He got up and went to go to sleep on his mat, and he saw an Ethiopian lying there, gnashing his teeth against him (cf. Ps. 34[35]:16).” This sight sends the disciple running “in fear” back to his abba, saying, “I need you, Father.” The abba tells him that he had this experience because of his disobedience, but “then, adjusting to his ability, he taught him the way of the solitary life, and shortly he became a good monk.”⁸⁶

Once again, the crisis in a young monk’s identity, configured in terms of his relationship to an elder, precipitates and is settled by the vision of the Ethiopian demon. The trouble caused by the disciple’s premature desire to live alone is resolved when the disciple, frightened by the Ethiopian, says, “I need you, Father,” the first time he so designates the elder monk, properly constructing a relationship of dependence. The disciple achieves the identity that he wants (to “become a monk”) at the end of the story. It is the unnerving alterity of the Ethiopian demon that effects the construction of the proper monastic identity. This Ethiopian demon, which is male, lacks explicit eroticism, but an erotic subtext is created both intertextually through the story’s parallelism with the oft-told anecdote about the appearance of the female Ethiopian I have just examined and intratextually through the demon’s appearance on the monk’s “mat” (*psiathion*) when he was about to sleep, a time and space charged with the homoerotic possibility that troubles the homosocial monastic bond.⁸⁷ The renunciation—or sublimation—of this powerful homoerotic pull enables the father-disciple relationship: “I need you, Father.”

A third example of this pattern differs from the two we have seen in that the monk with the identity problem is an abba, Arsenius, not a disciple, and the Ethiopian is not explicitly demonic. While young monks, as “persons without clear social profiles . . . nothing but their vigorous young

⁸⁵On the danger of a premature “transition from aspirant to abba,” see Maud Gleason, “Visiting and News: Gossip and Reputation-Management in the Desert,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 501–21, at 516.

⁸⁶*Apophthegmata patrum* Heraclius 1 (PG 65:185).

⁸⁷Compare this famous story: “A brother was attacked by a demon and went to a certain old man, saying, ‘Those two brothers are with one another.’ The old man learned that he

bodies,”⁸⁸ most often faced the pressing issue of identity clarification, responsibility for their development could unsettle even an exemplary abba. Arsenius, too often “troubled” (by visitors) at his dwelling in Lower Egypt, decides to abandon his cell and go to Alexandria, where he becomes seriously ill. This action throws his disciples, Alexander and Zoilus, into self-reproach (“Perhaps one of us has grieved the old man; that is why he has left us”) and makes them the object of criticism from other monks. Arsenius’s departure, they later tell him, was not an effective method of instruction (*pithanos*). Arsenius’s failure to play his proper role as abba is brought to a halt when he returns to the area of his monastic cell and encounters an Ethiopian: “When he was near the river, a certain Ethiopian slave-girl came and touched his sheepskin, and the old man rebuked her. Therefore, the slave-girl said to him, ‘If you are a monk, go to the desert [*to oros*].’ The old man, struck by compunction at this word, said to himself, ‘Arsenius, if you are a monk, go to the desert.’” Reconciliation between Arsenius and his disciples follows: “Thus they were healed, and he remained with them until his death.”⁸⁹

This Ethiopian girl, although not demonic, performs the same function as the previous two Ethiopian demons: her disturbing alterity shocks Arsenius into a state of compunction and into a resolve to reconstitute his identity as “a monk.” The meeting of Arsenius and the Ethiopian slave is dense with biblical allusions. The touch of the male teacher’s garment by the seemingly impure female recalls Jesus’ encounter with the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:25–34 par.); Arsenius’s sheepskin identifies him, as it did Antony, as an Elijah figure, guide to multiple Elishas.⁹⁰ The girl’s command, “If you are a monk . . .,” echoes the tempting words of Satan to Jesus: “If you are the Son of God . . .” (Matt. 4:3, 6 par.). But the scene reverses all these allusions. Arsenius, who should be playing the role of Elijah, has not been doing so; his presence “near the river” contradicts his identity as monk. The girl, as Ethiopian, female, and slave, embodies, like the hemorrhaging woman, social marginality but in an overdetermined way that marks her as highly impure, nearly demonic. But the girl is not the object of the male master’s healing: she heals the male master. Her words are not temptation but a call to Arsenius to embody the identity he

was mocked by a demon, and he sent to summon them. And when it was evening, he placed a mat [*psiathion*] for the two brothers, and covered them with a single spread, saying, ‘The children of God are holy.’ And he said to his disciple, ‘Shut up this brother in the cell outside, for he has the passion in himself’” (N 181 [*Revue de l’orient chrétien* 13 (1908): 270–71]).

⁸⁸Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on the History of Religions n.s. 13 (New York, 1988), 249.

⁸⁹*Apophthegmata patrum* Arsenius 32 (PG 65:97–100). The tension between solitude and care for others appears to have been especially acute for Arsenius: cf. Arsenius 1, 2, 7, 8, 11–13, etc. (PG 65:88–92).

⁹⁰Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 91 (SC 400:370).

has lost. In contrast to the previous two young monks, whose Ethiopian demons exteriorize a dimension of the self that they must renounce, Arsenius must interiorize the call from outside his self: this he accomplishes by repeating the words of the Ethiopian girl. This story, so structurally similar to the previous two, functions as a commentary on them: stripped of an explicitly demonic nature, the Ethiopian girl can make explicit the therapeutic function of the demonic encounters that we have examined. She reveals the Ethiopian demon's salutary effect of clarifying monastic identity.⁹¹

Two additional examples of the Ethiopian's erotic power illustrate how placement in a more sophisticated literary context can complicate the basic pattern we have seen in the *Apophthegmata*. The single appearance of an Ethiopian demon in Palladius's *Lausiaca History* draws on the more theorized ascetic psychology taught by Palladius's teacher, Evagrius Ponticus. Palladius's account is a doubled first-person narrative. In the outer frame Palladius describes a now familiar crisis in his own ascetic life: "troubled by the womanly desire" both in his "thoughts" and in his "night-time images," Palladius does not reveal his struggle to his monastic neighbors "nor to my teacher Evagrius" and considers leaving the desert altogether. Instead, he goes to the "Great Desert" and spends fifteen days with the monks of Scetis.⁹² Once again erotic temptation has disrupted a disciple's relationship with his elder and threatens to send him back to the world. But we can see here too the technical vocabulary of Evagrian thought: *logismoi* and *phantasiai*. Like our previous disciples, Palladius heads to a more remote desert location, but he does not encounter there the Ethiopian demon; rather, he encounters the monk Pachon's encounter with the Ethiopian demon.

After Palladius meets him and shares with him his discouragement, Pachon tells a remarkable story that locates the Ethiopian demon, still disturbingly other, more deeply within the self, at the intersection of mind and body. Pachon first explains the complexity of "the fight with fornication," which is "triple": "At times the flesh attacks us by displaying its vigor; at times the passions attack us through thoughts; and at times the demon itself attacks us with witchcraft." Then Pachon describes a twelve-year attack by the demon, starting when he turned fifty, that left him so despondent that he tried to commit suicide by exposing himself naked to hyenas in their den. When they did not kill him but rather smelled him and licked him all over, Pachon interpreted this as salvation by God and returned to his cell, where the demon "attacked me even more harshly than before" and brought him to the brink of "blasphemy":

⁹¹For a different interpretation of this story, see Gleason, 518–19.

⁹²Palladius *Historia Lausiaca* 23 (Cuthbert Butler, ed., *The Lausiaca History of Palladius* [Cambridge, 1904], 75).

Having transformed itself into an Ethiopian maiden, whom I had seen once in my youth gleaning at the harvest, she sat upon my knees, and she aroused me to such an extent that I thought I was having intercourse with her. Driven mad, I hit her on the ear, and she disappeared. For two years I could not bear the foul smell of my hand. Discouraged and in despair, I went wandering in the Great Desert. I found a small asp, picked it up, and placed it on my genitals, so that I might die by being bitten in this way. Although I rubbed the head of the beast against my genitals, since they were the cause of my temptation, I was not bitten.⁹³

At this point Pachon heard a voice “in my thinking” that told him that this experience happened to him so that he would not take confidence in his own ascetic practice but would rely on God’s help. Then Pachon found peace: as for the demon, “recognizing my contempt for him, he no longer came near me.”⁹⁴

While remaining firmly in the eroticized tradition of Ethiopian appearances, this demonic drag performance, in Evagrian terms, effects the transference of temptation from thought to body. Evagrius’s theory of images provides the script for the demon’s lap dance.⁹⁵ The demon places Pachon’s memory in motion, drawing up an image of an Ethiopian woman that is probably forty years old but that has left a “wound” in Pachon’s soul that is, despite its age, still “recent.” The mental image, its excruciating circumstantiality a clear sign of its power, stirs up the passion of lust within Pachon and thus moves the body. The Ethiopian woman stands at the boundary of thought and body, image and flesh: although she is but a memory, she nevertheless can sit on Pachon’s knees, receive the blunt force of his mad desire, and leave her foul odor in his hand. Desire has now been imbedded in Pachon’s flesh; the Ethiopian’s image is gone, but her stench remains. Is she the only thing that Pachon’s madness has led his hand to touch? His actions suggest not, as he rubs the asp against his genitals in a futile attempt to kill the place where his affliction dwells.

This graphic scene literally fleshes out Evagrian psychological theory: the erotically charged Ethiopian is so stereotypically fleshly—palpable, aromatic—that she is body even when she is a memory. Thus she can provide an efficient mechanism for the process by which, in the Evagrian view, a demonically inspired mental picture can create corporeal passion. She is, as

⁹³Palladius *Historia Lausiaca* 23 (Butler, 75–76).

⁹⁴Palladius *Historia Lausiaca* 23 (Butler, 76–77).

⁹⁵For modern summaries, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992), 75–76; François Refoulé, “Rêves et vie spirituelle d’après Evagre le Pontique,” *La vie spirituelle* 14 (1961): 470–516, at 501–4. The quoted terms that follow are drawn from Evagrius Ponticus *Practicus* 55–56 (SC 171:628–32); *On the Thoughts* 4 (SC 438:162–64).

Pachon would put it, a triple threat: flesh, thought, demon. It is the demon's airy substance that provides the material for this transformation. This Ethiopian, so attractive to Pachon that he can experience her foulness only in his own body, is not so clearly other to the monk and thus cannot serve the immediately clarifying function that her fellows provide in the similar stories: Pachon's peace comes only much later. What effect the telling of her has on Palladius we are not told. The Ethiopian demon is now experienced at one remove: it is now the story of the demon, interpreted in Evagrian terms, that must do the therapeutic work for Palladius, who occupies a position similar to that of later ascetic readers of the *Apophthegmata*.

We may seem to have traveled far from Didymus's Ethiopian, similarly fleshly but masculine and wounded by the arrows of Christ. However, we come full circle with another student of Evagrius, John Cassian, who places his account of the erotically powerful Ethiopian on the lips, ironically enough, of an Abba Moses, perhaps our Ethiopian Moses. Once again fornication disrupts the relationship between a disciple and an elder: disturbed by the demon of fornication, the "diligent young man" tells the elder, who "reprimanded him in the harshest language and declared that anyone who could be titillated by this kind of sin and desire was a wretched person and unworthy of bearing the name of monk."⁹⁶ The disciple is left "in a state of terrible hopelessness, disconsolate to the point of deadly sadness," and he tells Abba Apollos that he is ready to return to the world and take a wife.⁹⁷ After persuading the young man to put off his departure for a day, Apollos goes to the cell of the harsh elder and prays that God will turn the attack from the disciple to the elder.

And when he had concluded his prayer with a groan, he saw a black Ethiopian standing by the old man's cell and aiming fiery darts at him. At once he was wounded by them, and he left his cell and began to run around hither and thither as if he were crazed and drunk, and with his comings and goings he could no longer stay in it. . . . When Abba Apollos noticed that he had been turned into something like a madman driven by the furies, he realized that the devil's fiery missile, which he had seen, had been fixed in his heart and that his mental unbalance and intellectual confusion had been caused by unbearable seething emotions.⁹⁸

In this way Apollos is able to teach the old man how to be a more understanding counselor to younger monks, and both elder and disciple gain improved monastic identities. Avenging perhaps his wounding by the arrows of Didymus's Christ, the hypersexual, macrophallic Ethiopian strikes back. Here he becomes the demon of Eros par excellence, reincarnating the

⁹⁶Cassian *Conferences* 2.13.4 (SC 42:126; Ramsey, 95).

⁹⁷Cassian *Conferences* 2.13.5–6 (SC 42:126–27; Ramsey, 95–96).

⁹⁸Cassian *Conferences* 2.13.7–8 (SC 42:127; Ramsey, 96).

fearsome deity of Hesiod and Greek tragedy who drove people mad with the fiery darts of his power before he got multiplied into the charming but by no means scary cupids that flit across the walls of Pompeiian villas.⁹⁹ It was the power of the monks' own erotic desires that combined with the stereotypical hypersexuality of the Ethiopian to fuel this resurrection of Eros.

THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE ETHIOPIAN: FIXITY AND TRANSFORMABILITY

I have argued that several of the accounts of Ethiopian demons deploy the stereotypical hypersexuality and fleshliness of the Ethiopian in order to bring stability to a monastic identity in flux. The encounter with the Ethiopian demon, simultaneously attractive and frightening in its condensed visual representation of the self's erotic desire, drives the monk to solidify his position as a monk, especially as a good father or son. By its disturbing yet therapeutic embodiment of alterity within the self, the Ethiopian demon provides some traction, as it were, for the monk in crisis to move to an improved ascetic state. This deployment of the Ethiopian depends, as do all stereotypes, on the presumption of a fixed nature in the Ethiopian: he or she is always body—hypersexual, powerful, and/or macrophallic—while the monk is transformable into spirit, able to renounce the eroticism that sticks to the Ethiopian as closely as his or her skin.

But in fact the Ethiopian was not so fixed, as Abba Moses and other successful Ethiopian ascetics reveal. When the virtuous Moses is set beside his demonic fellows, the Ethiopian emerges, as Bhabha describes for the colonial stereotype, as “curiously mixed and split”: he or she “is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child”; “what is being dramatized is a separation—*between* races, cultures, histories, *within* histories—a separation between *before* and *after* that repeats obsessively the mythical moment or disjunction.”¹⁰⁰ Didymus's Ethiopian dramatized the separation before and after conversion to Christianity, the wounding by the choice shaft that engendered ecclesiastical men. In monastic literature it is the ascetic regime that effects the separation between Ethiopian eroticism and Ethiopian virtue. Thus the Ethiopian is “ambivalent” in monastic discourse, as is the stereotype in colonial discourse, which “on the one hand . . . proposes a teleology—under certain conditions of colonial domination and control the native is progressively reformable. On the other, however, it effectively displays the ‘separation,’ makes it more visible.”¹⁰¹ As the self that the monk both renounces (demon) and desires to become (Moses)—the before and after of monasticism simultaneously—the Ethiopian exposes the ambivalence between fixity and transformability that drives ascetic discourse more generally.

⁹⁹T. G. Rosenmeyer, “Eros-Erotos,” *Phoenix* 5 (1951): 11–22; Padel, 115–20.

¹⁰⁰Bhabha, 82, emphasis in original.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 82–83.

That ambivalence is most apparent when the Ethiopian appears more than once in a single document, as is the case in the *Historia Monachorum*. This work reports an anonymous outsider's journey through monastic Egypt with a party of fellow pilgrims. Like other ancient travel literature, it presents the foreign land it describes in fantastic terms;¹⁰² the three appearances of Ethiopians (in the original Greek version) may lend a touch of the exotic to its account of the Egyptian monks' "inspired and marvelous and virtuous way of life" in the mysterious desert.¹⁰³ We have already seen how Ethiopians first appear, as barbarian raiders who cause the imperial general enough anxiety that he consults John of Lycopolis, who assures him of victory.¹⁰⁴ This picture of a fierce Ethiopian threat is followed several chapters later by a "small Ethiopian," whom Abba Apollo removes from his neck and casts into the sand as it cries out, "I am the demon of pride."¹⁰⁵ Later in the story of Apollo, Ethiopians return, now as exemplars of ascetic transformation. After describing a murderer who became a monk and so "changed from a wolf into an innocent lamb" (fulfilling Isa. 65:25), the author remarks, "It was possible to see also Ethiopians there practicing asceticism with the monks, many of them excelling in the virtues, and in them being fulfilled the scripture that says, 'Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand to God' (Ps. 67[68]:32)."¹⁰⁶ From menacing barbarians who must be defeated and small demons who must be thrust aside to exemplary ascetics who fulfill Scripture, the career of the Ethiopians is a remarkable demonstration of the power of the ascetic program to transform even the most recalcitrant self.

To make this point, the anonymous author must both invoke and disavow the otherness of the Ethiopian with respect to himself and his assumed non-Ethiopian readers. The Ethiopian raiders are, as barbarian invaders, menacingly foreign. Apollo's demon of pride is, like its erotic counterparts, ambiguously located. After Apollo has spent forty years in the desert, from the age of fifteen, God tells him that he is the divinely appointed agent to end paganism: "You will banish all worship of demons." In God's own announcement there is temptation for Apollo, as the monk's reply reveals: "Take from me, Lord, arrogance, lest I lose every good by being exalted above the brotherhood." It is then that God instructs him to remove the demon, the small Ethiopian, from his neck.¹⁰⁷ The demon's attachment to his neck indicates that the pride or arrogance belongs to Apollo, but the demon's Ethiopianness marks the sin as foreign, other, able

¹⁰²Frank, 49–61.

¹⁰³*Historia Monachorum* pref. 5 (Festugière, 7).

¹⁰⁴*Historia Monachorum* 1.2 (Festugière, 9–10). In his revision of this passage, Rufinus enlarges on the savagery of the Ethiopian raiders (Schulz-Flügel, 249).

¹⁰⁵*Historia Monachorum* 8.4 (Festugière, 48).

¹⁰⁶*Historia Monachorum* 8.34–35 (Festugière, 60–61).

¹⁰⁷*Historia Monachorum* 8.3–4 (Festugière, 47–48).

to be renounced. The ascetic Ethiopians, finally, excel in the virtues and fulfill Scripture, but they are “with the monks” rather than of them. They conform to “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*.”¹⁰⁸

Homi Bhabha calls “mimicry” the desire in colonial discourse to produce this Other who is almost the same but not quite—“Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”¹⁰⁹ The mimic man is the product of the colonial civilizing mission, but transformation of the colonized cannot be complete but must be partial: “strategic failure” ensures the continuing need of colonizing institutions.¹¹⁰ Bhabha emphasizes the disturbing effect of mimicry, which disrupts colonial authority first by threatening to produce “‘inappropriate’ colonial subjects” but more profoundly by its “metonymy of presence.” The products of colonial mimicry are menacing in their partiality, which undermines any secure essential identity:

They are also . . . the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as “inappropriate” colonial subjects. A desire that, through the repetition of *partial presence*, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. It is a desire that reverses “in part” the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer’s presence; a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which, as Foucault describes it, liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man’s being through which he extends his sovereignty.¹¹¹

The *Historia Monachorum*’s Ethiopian ascetics—monks, but not quite—similarly disturb the normality of the *Historia*’s racial symbolism, rendering partial the essentialized identities of (black) demon and (white) monk set up in the Apollo story. As Judith Perkins has described for Charikleia, the white Ethiopian in Heliodorus’s *Aithiopika*, their presence “destabilizes the reader’s sense of the ‘fixity’ of cultural otherness, the primary element in establishing any cultural hierarchy.”¹¹²

It is from this perspective that I approach the stories of Abba Moses, the mimic man of the Egyptian desert. In his *Lausiatic History* Palladius, who reported Pachon’s excruciating encounter with the demonic Ethiopian

¹⁰⁸Bhabha, 86, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 87.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 86.

¹¹¹Ibid., 88–89.

¹¹²Judith Perkins, “An Ancient ‘Passing’ Novel: Heliodorus’ *Aithiopika*,” *Arethusa* 32 (1999): 197–214.

maiden, uses Moses to display the transformative power of the ascetic regime.¹¹³ Doubly marked as “an Ethiopian by birth, who was black” (not the white kind, like Charikleia), Moses is a former slave, robber, even murderer whose past life is so sordid Palladius feels compelled to apologize for describing it: “I am obliged to tell about his wicked behavior in order to demonstrate the excellence of his conversion.”¹¹⁴ Nearly all of Palladius’s account is devoted to narrating how hard Moses must labor under the direction of Abba Isidore and another father to liberate his “reason” from his “disposition toward intemperance and fornication.”¹¹⁵ The kernel for Palladius’s report may lie in a saying attributed to Moses himself in the Ethiopic sayings collection: attacked “every day” by fornication when he was young, Moses says, “I went into the inner desert and stayed there forty-two days; I did not eat bread or drink water or lie down or sit, but prayed to God.” After that the demon no longer attacked him.¹¹⁶ Lengthening (possibly) Moses’ struggle to over six years, Palladius makes apparent to his reader the need for ascetic discipline: it works even on the Ethiopian; it will work for you (non-Ethiopian reader).

This success proved menacing: the taunting of Abba Moses in the Greek *Apophthegmata* may be read as the monks’ failed attempt to reassert the essentialized stability of “white” and “black” identities in the face of the ambivalence embodied in Moses’ mimicry. In contrast to Palladius’s narrative, the *Sayings* present Moses’ virtue as uncontested: his struggle with fornication under Abba Isidore is extremely compressed—a vision of the angels who aid “the saints” is enough to send him back to his cell with courage; his awareness of his own sins and reluctance to judge those of another shame his fellow monks; his prayers to God bring a miraculous gift of water; even when he disobeys a monastic rule he is shown to be obeying “the commandment of God.”¹¹⁷ This Moses (not the one of Palladius) is indeed “too good to be true,”¹¹⁸ or rather too good to be Ethiopian, or perhaps too Ethiopian to be white. The hostility of other monks to Moses suggests the “phobia” that arises “when the contours of the self are overtaxed by the clash with something ‘too good’ or ‘too bad.’”¹¹⁹ One gibe aimed at Moses’ color comes when he has literally become white by being clothed in the epod signifying his new ordained status: “And the archbishop said to him, ‘Look, you have become completely white, Abba Moses.’ The old man said to him, ‘On the outside [only], Lord Father, or also on the inside?’”¹²⁰ Moses’ reply belongs to the “black body but white soul” topos

¹¹³Wimbush, 86–87.

¹¹⁴Palladius *Historia Lausiaca* 19 (Butler, 58; Wicker, 335).

¹¹⁵Palladius *Historia Lausiaca* 19 (Butler, 60; Wicker, 336–37, alt.).

¹¹⁶*Apophthegmata patrum* (Ethiopic) 14.26 (Arras, 84).

¹¹⁷*Apophthegmata patrum* Moses 1, 2, 5, 13 (PG 65:281–88).

¹¹⁸Wimbush, 86.

¹¹⁹Kristeva, 188.

¹²⁰*Apophthegmata patrum* Moses 4 (PG 65:284).

that was widespread in literature of the period,¹²¹ but its artful performance of subordination—repeating but (perhaps) mocking the stereotypes on which the archbishop’s joke depends, addressing the archbishop with inflated deference—suggests manipulation and concealment,¹²² an Other who has not been completely reformed, despite his appearance in white clerical garb. Mimicry, as Bhabha deploys it, not only presents an ambivalent Other to the colonizer but also opens a space for resistance through mockery to the colonized. Some have criticized this move as “reinscribing colonialism as a totalizing presence . . . there is simply no space in which the colonized can respond to their subjugation other than in the terms already defined by their masters.”¹²³ Here the difference between colonialism and monasticism as discourses comes into play: the voluntaristic nature of entry into monastic discourse undermines its totalizing pretensions and provides room for resistant mockery. Unlike a truly colonized person, Moses presumably “wants to be subjected” to ascetic discourse: free to leave the game, he can challenge its rules.¹²⁴

The possibility that Moses’ reply contests the color symbolism of ascetic discourse is suggested by the archbishop’s next move, which indicates a desire to know the true mind of the white Ethiopian, to discover a possible “hidden transcript” of resistance in Moses’ deference,¹²⁵ to discern whether mimicry has become mockery: “Wishing to test him, the archbishop said to the clergy, ‘When Abba Moses comes into the sanctuary, drive him away, and follow him to hear what he says.’ So the old man came in, and they rebuked him and drove him away, saying, ‘Go outside, Ethiopian!’ As he went out, he said to himself, ‘They have acted rightly concerning you, you ash-skinned one, you black one. You are not a human being, so why do you go among human beings?’”¹²⁶ Moses accepts both the equation of blackness with being nonhuman (demonic?) and the separation from non-Ethiopians (i.e., human beings) this entails, but he

¹²¹Cracco Ruggini, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 108–13.

¹²²On subordinates’ “artful manipulation of deference and flattery to achieve” their “own ends,” see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), 33–36. The theories of Scott and Bhabha, both of which I invoke here, are not equivalent, for “whereas Scott argues for an emergence of intentional, albeit coded resistance, Bhabha’s writings point to a more indirect and unintentional assertion of ‘difference’” (Corinne G. Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India* [New York, 2001], 37). Neither theory alone, my argument suggests, is adequate to the rich ambiguities of these Moses stories (cf. Dempsey, 37–38).

¹²³Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “The Mystic East”* (London, 1999), 204.

¹²⁴The quoted phrase is from Jason BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body: In Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore, 2000), 67, who makes this point regarding Manichaean subjects and Foucaultian analysis.

¹²⁵The archbishop’s desire to learn what Moses says in private indicates that he suspects the existence of precisely what Scott calls the “hidden transcript”: “discourse that takes place ‘offstage,’ beyond direct observation by powerholders” (4).

¹²⁶*Apophthegmata patrum* Moses 4 (PG 65:284).

does so under the sign of monastic self-abnegation as a remarkable demonstration of the virtue of humility.¹²⁷ His acceptance of the demonized subjectivity of the “Ethiopian” effects his transformation into the idealized subjectivity of the “humble” that ascetic discourse seeks to create. Moses shows himself to be indeed white “on the inside” if black “on the outside”—the same but not quite. Likewise, he remains silent when monks at a meeting say, “Why does this Ethiopian come among us?” Asked by these same monks whether he was “not at all grieved” by their taunt, Moses quotes a Psalm—“I was grieved, but I did not speak” (76[77]:5)—that concludes, “You led your people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (76[77]:21).¹²⁸ When does mimicry become mockery? When is humility a strategy of resistance? The supremely humble Moses may be precisely the subject that ascetic discourse desires, but the taunting monks disavow the very self they presumably desire for themselves.

It may be tempting to defuse the ambivalence posed by Ethiopian Moses by assigning the fixity of the Ethiopian demon to its nature as demonic, leaving the “real” Ethiopian (represented by Moses) unproblematically transformable. But the monastic literature itself will not allow this escape. Moses accepts his unchanging status as non-human Ethiopian (fixed in his black skin) as he demonstrates his human capacity for repentance and humility. Palladius is more revealing: “Such was the effect of his conversion,” Palladius reports, that Moses “brought his helper in wickedness from his youth, the very demon who was his companion in sin, forthwith to the acknowledgment of Christ.”¹²⁹ This passage has puzzled both modern scholars, who have wondered at a repentant demon, and medieval copyists, who often just changed the text.¹³⁰ There is, of course, the possibility that Palladius, a student of the Origenist Evagrius Ponticus, simply believed that demons could repent and be saved. But the circulation of Ethiopian demons through ascetic discourse, including Palladius’s own text, colludes with this statement to create a paradox: the very Ethiopian whose blackness undeniably indicates demonic evil has repented and renounced that evil. The demon has become a monk.

For Bhabha, the ambivalence of mimicry and the stereotype is revealing of a more basic lack at the heart of the colonial project: there is no unified subject, whether colonial or colonized, but only partial presences, exemplified by the mimic, which are continually displaced and renegotiated within a space marked by “hybridity,” “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.”¹³¹ The racial stereotype

¹²⁷Cf. Cracco Ruggini, “Il negro buono e il negro malvagio,” 116–17; Gleason, 520–21.

¹²⁸*Apophthegmata patrum* Moses 3 (PG 65:284).

¹²⁹Palladius *Historia Lausiaca* 19 (Butler, 59; Wicker, 336).

¹³⁰Robert T. Meyer, ed. and trans., *Palladius: The Lausiaca History*, Ancient Christian Writers 34 (New York, 1964), 184, n. 183.

¹³¹Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London, 1998), 118.

emerges as a useful “fantasy”—in Greek, *phantasia*, a term that many monks would readily understand—in the colonizer’s quest to “fix identity,” to realize “the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin.”¹³² The aim of colonial discourse, of course, is to dominate the other who is stereotyped. The immediate aim of ascetic discourse is not to dominate Ethiopians but to dominate the self or an aspect of the self that is Ethiopianized. The Ethiopian demon, so clearly marked as evil and other, enabled the monk to exteriorize his self, his desiring self, so as to renounce it as not, in fact, his self.

In the fascinated rejection that the foreigner arouses in us, there is a share of uncanny strangeness in the sense of the depersonalization that Freud discovered in it, and which takes up again our infantile desires and fears of the other—the other of death, the other of woman, the other of uncontrollable drive. The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious—that “improper” facet of our impossible “own and proper.”¹³³

This splitting of the self, which Kristeva urges us to confront in order to overcome xenophobia, was, however, an essential step in the formation of a monastic self wholly devoted to God and in fact could not be closed. For the end of “warfare” with the demons—and thus with the self—would have meant the end of the ascetic project itself and thus was impossible, as numerous sayings of the fathers insist.¹³⁴ The transformable, potentially repentant self (monk) required a fixed, recalcitrant self (demon) to renounce. The monk desired to be perfect but not quite. The Ethiopian embodied this ambivalence, so unrelentingly powerful in his macrophallic sexuality and yet, rarely but amazingly, amenable to ascetic transformation. The Ethiopian was indeed demonic but not quite.

CONCLUSION

Demons, Charles Stewart has written, are “concerted representations of otherness.” Otherness is not always the same but varies according to

¹³²Bhabha, 81, 107.

¹³³Kristeva, 191.

¹³⁴“Abba Poemen said about Abba John the Dwarf that he exhorted God and the passions were removed from him. And in this way he became untroubled. When he visited a certain old man, he announced to him, ‘I see myself at rest and having no combat.’ And the old man said to him, ‘Go and ask God that combat might come to you. For it is through the combats that the soul makes progress.’ When the combat came, he no longer prayed that the combat be removed from him, but he said, ‘Give to me, Lord, endurance in the combats’” (*Apophthegmata patrum* 7.12 [SC 387:342]). Cf. Antony 5; Evagrius 5 (PG 65:77, 176); *Apophthegmata patrum* 7.25, 29 (SC 387:356, 358); N 210 (*Revue de l’orient chrétien* 13 [1908]: 280). “This built-in limit to the perfectability of the self gives asceticism a certain irreducibility, for it is both dynamic and static; the ascetic is constantly progressing, but never

context.¹³⁵ The black-skinned demon of early Christian monastic literature was born from the association of blackness with sin and evil that was common in numerous varieties of ancient Mediterranean religious discourse, but it became Ethiopian (and not merely black) in Egypt. Egyptians, their own dark skin commending them to others as symbols for the demonic, turned to their proximate other, the Ethiopian, to do the same. The stereotypical hypersexuality of the Ethiopian provided a secure and clearly marked alterity by which monks could, through exteriorization, clarify their identities as good monastic sons or fathers at moments of crisis. But this crystallization of identity that the Ethiopian demon facilitated was disturbed by an Ethiopian such as Moses: his exemplary humility was the object of ascetic desire, but his black skin continued to mark him as the self that must be renounced. Although it is usually the case that the demonic derives its horror from its fluidity, its ability to “display the traits of two or more categories simultaneously” or to change categories,¹³⁶ here it was the human being Moses who inspired such fear in his monastic colleagues. His mimicry exposed the continued presence of the uncanny alterity of self that the monks wanted to believe they could leave behind.

Considering the accounts of Ethiopian Moses, so determined by “certain types of historical-political realities, prejudices, and sensibilities,” Vincent Wimbush suggests that early Christian asceticism may have been more “worldly” than some of its adherents would have liked to admit¹³⁷—and perhaps more than some of its modern interpreters would like to admit. One of the most salutary developments in recent scholarship—inspired in part by Foucault’s themes of sexuality, self-knowledge, and power—has been the recognition of the subversive nature of asceticism, how its renunciation of standard cultural markers of prestige (wealth, family, political power) unsettles dominant values and provides a space for the creation of subjectivities that resist the prevailing ideology. This perspective has fostered exciting historical studies that demonstrate precisely how late ancient ascetic behaviors or rhetoric challenged established authority and nuanced and highly persuasive theories of “ascetic persons as performance artists, enacting the spiritual body in the here-and-now,” and of asceticism

arrives” (Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* [Chicago, 1987], 43). Cf. David Brakke, “The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 419–60, at 450–51.

¹³⁵Charles Stewart, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture*, Princeton Modern Greek Studies (Princeton, 1991), 170–71, 249.

¹³⁶Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 1999), 171.

¹³⁷Wimbush, 90.

as “performances within a dominant social environment intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe.”¹³⁸ Such work has been a welcome change from older views that could see in ascetic behaviors only repressed sexuality and hatred for the body and has provided the theoretical framework for this study. But this new perspective can exaggerate the success of the withdrawal claimed by ascetics when it speaks of the alternative symbolic universe constructed by ascetic performances as “an *entirely* alternative creation” or as “an ideological construction from *outside* the dominant structure.”¹³⁹ The Ethiopian—demon and monk—haunts this language of pure separation with a specter of hybridity: the ascetic symbolic universe participates in the dominant discourse even while seeking to contest it.¹⁴⁰ It is not a matter merely of using the cultural materials at hand to symbolize ideas that are not themselves implicated in the wider culture’s discursive categories. There can be no doubt that the monastic practice of humility resisted hegemonic Roman notions of prestige and power, but it did not do so “entirely” and from “outside the dominant structure.” The humility of the monk literally *looks different* when it is performed by an Ethiopian accepting that he is “not a human being.” In comparison to Greco-Roman discourse of cultural and somatic superiority, Christian asceticism appears different—but not quite.

¹³⁸Historical studies: James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park, PA, 1995); Cooper, 45–67. Performance artists: Patricia Cox Miller, “Desert Asceticism and ‘The Body from Nowhere,’” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 137–53. Performances: Valantasis, “Constructions of Power,” 797; cf. Valantasis, “A Theory of the Social Function of Asceticism,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York, 1995), 544–52, at 548.

¹³⁹Valantasis, “Constructions of Power,” 813, emphasis added. I doubt that, if pressed, Valantasis would hold to this language: “It is not necessary that the alternative culture formed through asceticism oppose the dominant culture. The counter-cultural orientation need not indicate hostility or mutual exclusion. Cultures may coinhere, and an ascetic may participate in a number of different cultures simultaneously” (“Theory of the Social Function,” 549). My own formulation would be that cultures always coinhere, and an ascetic always participates in a number of different cultures simultaneously (cf. Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* [Minneapolis, 1997], 53–56).

¹⁴⁰“Asceticism neither simply condemns culture nor simply endorses it; it does both. Asceticism, we could say, *raises the issue* of culture by structuring an opposition between culture and its opposite” (Harpham, xii, emphasis in original).



The Abbot of Druimenaig: Genderbending in Gaelic Tradition

Author(s): Barbara Hillers

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THE ABBOT OF DRUIMENAIG:
GENDERBENDING IN GAELIC TRADITION

In recent years scholars have been skeptical of the idea that medieval Irish literature might be rooted in the oral tradition. James Carney found it "impossible for many reasons to believe that the form of any of the fictions or entertainments preserved in our medieval manuscripts is in any way close to the form in which they would be told when they existed (in so far as they actually did) on a purely oral level."¹ The medieval anecdote "The Abbot of Druimenaig" makes an interesting test case. The "Abbot" has some modern-day cousins: a story which is essentially the same as the medieval anecdote continues to be told in the oral tradition of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. While we cannot know exactly how the story was told in medieval Ireland, a study of the modern tradition shows that, in this case, the form of the literary fiction is not so very different from oral narratives. In fact, as I will show, we can use the modern folk versions to throw light on the medieval anecdote.

The story is all the more interesting for being set in a monastic milieu, a setting which makes its oral antecedents seem particularly surprising. The two main characters are monastic dignitaries, one an abbot, the other an erenagh (*airchinnech*); both are married. The most remarkable aspect of the monastic setting is not the fact of clerical marriage,² which is treated as a matter of course, but rather the story's humorous impact: the abbot is a tragicomic figure, and more comic than tragic, at that. It is tempting to speculate on whether the story was told as an in-joke of an anti-clerical, or rather an inter-clerical nature. However, any such interpretation depends upon a reconstruction of the social and historical provenance of the anecdote. Because of the small amount of contextual information given, such a reconstruction may prove difficult, and I will not attempt to speculate on it here.

The story is set in County Dublin, judging by two place names mentioned in the story. The two protagonists of the story are the abbot of Druimenaig and the erenagh of Croimglenn. Druimenaig, in modern spelling Druim Eanaigh, means "the ridge of the bog" and is a fairly popular placename in Ireland; it was anglicized as Drumanny, Drumeny or Drimnagh.³ Croimglenn, "the crooked valley," anglicized Crumlin, is also a common place name; however, as the two places are said to be adjacent to each other, and of monastic provenance, we can reasonably identify Druim Eanaigh as modern-day Drimnagh, and Croimglenn as Crumlin, both of which are suburbs of Dublin.⁴

The text of our story is preserved in four late medieval manuscripts, three of which are now in British libraries. Egerton 1781 and Additional 30512 are both in the British Library, and Rawlinson B 512 in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The fourth manuscript, the Book of Fermoy, is in the Royal Irish Academy.⁵

Egerton 1781, a vellum manuscript, can be dated fairly precisely to 1484-87; it was written by members of the Mac Parthaláin family of scribes in Tullyhaw, County Cavan. Additional manuscript 30512, also on vellum, was begun in the fifteenth century by the prolific scribe Uilliam Mac an Lega; however, our story is in the hand of the second scribe, Torna mac Torna Uí Mhaoilchonaire, who worked for the Fitzgeralds of Desmond and died in 1532. The Book of Fermoy, finally, is a fifteenth-century vellum manuscript, a collection of religious, legendary and historical matter compiled for the Roche Family of Fermoy in County Cork.

Kuno Meyer edited the text from Additional 30512, with variants from the Book of Fermoy, in the first volume of *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*.⁶ A new edition seems desirable, especially as Meyer's edition is based on only two of the four manuscripts.⁷ The story has been briefly described by Flower in *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum*,⁸ and by Murphy and Fitzpatrick in *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*.⁹ In 1908 Henri Gaidoz published a French translation and discussion of Meyer's text, which does not, however, seem to have become widely known among Celticists.¹⁰ An English translation by Donnchadh Ó Corráin and John Montague appeared more recently.¹¹ As the text is fairly short I include my own translation, based on Meyer's readings of Additional 30512 and the Book of Fermoy.

Story of the Abbot of Druimenaig, Who Was Changed into a Woman

A certain young man who held the abbacy of Druimenaig endeavored to make a great and fine banquet in observation of Easter. After preparing the banquet the young man goes out of the house and sits on a big high pleasant hill that was above the settlement; and it is thus the young man was, a very comely linen hood around his head and a tunic of royal silk closely fitted to his white skin, and an excellent very beautiful robe on top of that, and a cloak of dark-brown scarlet flowing around him, and a gold-hilted sword fit for assembly in his hand. And when he had reached the top, he put his elbow to the ground and slept.

And after he woke up from his sleep, when he wanted to take his sword, he only found a woman's weapon in its place, i.e. a distaff. And this is how he was, the skirt of a woman's tunic on him down to the ground, and on his head there was a woman's hairdo, long golden very beautiful hair falling in fine curls from the top of his head, and when he passed his hand over his face he did not find any hair of a beard or mustache there, and he put his hand between his thighs and he found the sign of womanhood there. Nevertheless the young

man did not believe those various signs, for he thought that it was shape shifting and magic which had been played on him.

Then a certain big woman comes past him, and she was very ugly, brown and exceedingly hideous, an apparition with grey bristles and deep-set eyes, and this is what she said: "Why are you here, smooth young blond girl, alone on this hillock at the end of the day and the very beginning of night?" And he was gloomy and tearful and sad at this news and he said after that, "I do not know where I will go or what I will do hence. Because if I go to my house, my people would not recognize me, and if I should leave, I'm in danger as a single woman going about on her own. Therefore then this is best for me, to go through the world until God may pass judgment on me, for it is he who has distorted my shape and my form and has put me in disfigurement and repulsiveness. But still, although God has given me this change of appearance, I swear in the presence of the Creator that I have not hung a person or wronged anyone, that I have not committed an outrage against bell or relic or staff, nor persecuted a church, nor spoken evil against anyone, nor has a guest ever gone dissatisfied from my dwelling and my house."

He descended then from the knoll and from the pleasant, beautifully sloping hill, and he raised a sore lament and a heavy sorrowful cry, and this is what he said going down the hill: "Pity," he said, "that the ground of the hill does not swallow me up this very moment, because I do not know whither I will go or what I will do." She went off after that down across the slope of the hill, until she reached the green of Croimglenn, a church that was to the west of Druimenaig. After that she meets a certain tall soldierly young man on the village green, and the young man felt eager excessive love for her and began to entreat her and did not leave off until he had union and intercourse with her. And after they had slept together, the young man asked the girl from what place she came and who she was. The girl told him that he would not get that knowledge from her whether they would be together for long or short. "I, however," he said, "will tell you my name, for I am erenagh of this church, which is called Croimglenn, and my wife died two years ago, and you will be my harmonious and well-matched wife." And they went together then to the erenagh's house and the people of the house bade her a friendly and courteous welcome, and she was with him for seven years as his wife and his spouse, and seven children she bore him during that time.

After that a messenger comes to the erenagh from the congregation and assembly of Druimenaig to invite him for Easter and she goes together with the erenagh to the hill on which her shape was first transformed, and she falls immediately asleep on the hill, and the erenagh goes with his people to the church. And after the girl woke up from her sleep, it is thus she was, a man,

with the same appearance she had had in the first place, and she found her gold-hilted, ornamented sword on her knee, and this is what she said: "O powerful God, the lamenting in which I am is great," and after a great lamentation he went to his original home and his wife says to him then: "It's long that you are absent from home." Then the drinking hall had been arranged and that strange story was told to the people of the house. However, that story was not believed by them, for his wife said that he had not been absent for more than one hour of that day. Finally, after giving them many various proofs, his case is presented and a judgment made between him and the erenagh of Croimglenn, and this is the judgment that was made between them: to divide the children in half, giving the extra son to the erenagh for fosterage, and this is how they parted from each other, etc.

While shape-shifting is a common motif in European myth and folklore, gender-shifting is not. It is, however, a frequent motif in India, as Norman Brown has shown, who describes five means of gender transformation, including bathing in an enchanted pool, a deity's curse, and consumption of a magic pill.¹² It is important to distinguish two distinct types of stories, although stories about gender transformations are generally lumped together. In the first type, a girl is changed into a boy in response to an urgent need. Thus the baby daughter of a king who desperately needs a male heir is changed into a baby boy; or else the girl is disguised as a boy and has to play the part of a boy, until after some adventures she is "rewarded" by being changed into a boy. In the only international folktale type whose subject is a gender change (Aarne-Thompson type AT 514, *The Shift of Sex*), a sister takes her brother's place and becomes a soldier. She defeats the king's enemies and is given his daughter in marriage. Her interesting predicament is finally resolved by a magic change of sex. This type of story endorses society's preference of a boy over a girl; the sex change is a divine favor or reward, elevating a girl to the status and function of a man.

There are several instances of this motif in early Irish hagiography. The Irish St Abban is credited with a miracle in the following episode:

Now the King was old at this time, and he had no heir except a daughter whom his wife bore that very night. And he requested Abban to baptize her. And he perceived the sadness of the King at having no heir. "If God pleases," said Abban, "thou shalt have an heir." "Nay," said the King, "that is impossible for me owing to my age." Abban took the infant in his hands, and prayed earnestly to God that the king might

have an heir; and the girl that he immersed in the font he took out as a boy, and laid it in the King's bosom. "Here is thy son," said he. And the King was exceeding glad, and so were the people of the country, at these miracles. And Abban and the King parted in great amity...¹³

The same story occurs elsewhere in Irish hagiography,¹⁴ genealogy,¹⁵ and in folk tradition.¹⁶ In all cases the sex change is a miracle performed by a holy man during baptism. These versions show that the motif was current in Irish ecclesiastical literature.

The sex change in "The Abbot of Druimenaig" belongs to a different type of gender transformation. Aside from the fact that the hagiographical episodes have a clear didactic purpose,¹⁷ they differ from "The Abbot of Druimenaig" both structurally and functionally. Structurally, the direction of the gender change is opposite in the two legends. In the first type of narrative a girl is changed into a boy and in the second type of narrative, a man is changed into a woman. The first type is not interested in the sexual aspect of gender, but rather in the different social role and function allotted to men and women. The girl is changed into a boy before becoming sexually active, and her change of sex is permanent. The second type, on the other hand, focuses on sexuality and on gender experience: the hero is a grown man who is temporarily transformed into a woman, experiences female sexuality and childbirth, and is finally changed back into a man. The latter type is, in fact, the exact counterpart of the former; as the girl is changed into a boy by the blessing of a divinity or holy person, the man is transformed into a woman by a curse.

The most famous example of the second type of gender transformation is the story of the blind Greek seer, Teiresias, found in numerous Classical sources.¹⁸ According to some authors, Teiresias experienced a gender change when he came upon two mating snakes. After seven years he is changed back into his original form, and consulted by Zeus and Hera in their quarrel about whether women or men derive more pleasure from sex.¹⁹ While Teiresias's story is unique in western tradition, it is more common in the east, particularly in India. The *Panchatantra* tells the story of the Râdsharshi Bhangûsvana who offended the god Indra and was transformed into a woman. He goes to live in the forest, leaving his realm to be administered by his hundred sons. In the forest, he gives birth to another hundred sons, and eventually returns to rule his kingdom. Indra, still angry, kills all of his two hundred sons, but later relents and asks the hero to choose whether he wants him to revive those sons who he fathered or those who he gave birth to. The king chooses the hundred he gave birth to, because, he argues, a mother's love is greater than a father's. Indra

finally relents and revives all his sons; he also offers to change him back into a man, but the king prefers to remain as a woman.²⁰ Flower, in his note on "The Abbot of Druimenaig," draws attention to another parallel, the Indian romance entitled "The Rose of Bakawali." The hero of this story, Prince Tadjulmuluk, is transformed into a young woman when he takes a dip in a pool. In his female shape he encounters a young man; he becomes his wife and the mother of his son. One day, after another bath, he is turned into a young Abyssinian, and is claimed by a hideous black woman as her husband. After yet another bath he finds himself back in his original shape near the first pool, his hat and stick just where he had left them.²¹

"The Abbot of Druimenaig" is an Irish reflex of this type of gender transformation which is not otherwise known in Western Europe.²² There is no reason to believe that the "Abbot" was a literary borrowing from the Greek and Indian versions, and we must assume that the story reached Ireland through oral channels.

There is no other version of the story in medieval Irish literature.²³ A story very similar to the abbot's mishaps does, however, turn up in modern Gaelic storytelling tradition, and we will now turn our attention to these modern cousins of the "Abbot." In the folk versions the gender change motif has been integrated into other stories, rather than being told as a separate narrative. The first of these is *The Man Who Had No Story*,²⁴ a legend which tells of the incredible adventures that happen to the unfortunate protagonist because he does not know how to tell a story. The hero receives hospitality in a house, and is asked to tell a story to pass the time. When he fails to do so, his hosts send him out on a strange series of adventures. Unbeknownst to him, the house is actually an otherworld habitation, and his hosts belong to the *sí*, the fairy people. Eventually, he returns to the same house from which he started, where he is told by his hosts that if he is ever asked for a story again, he will now have at least one story to tell: the story of his own adventures that night. While the frame story of *The Man Who Had No Story* is very stable, the inset story of the hero's adventures varies greatly, although in all cases the adventures tend to be of a grotesque nature and are supernaturally induced. Of particular interest to us in the context of the "Abbot of Druimenaig" are four Scottish versions, three of them from the archives of the School of Scottish Studies.²⁵ In the Scottish stories, the hapless hero is sent to fetch a bailer from a boat. When he climbs into the boat, it takes off with him and brings him to the coast of Ireland. Halfway through the trip the protagonist notices that he is suddenly wearing women's clothes. This is how Bessie Whyte tells the episode:

But half-way across this stretch o water he looks doon at himsel, an in place o this big auld tackety boots covered wi dung there wis dainty wee shoes; silk stockins; nice skirt! Well he seen this, an then he looks ower intae the water an there's the face o a beautiful girl showin back at him. He says, "That's funny," he says. "That's queer, that!"²⁶

Nor is the transformation simply a matter of dress style, as the next version will illustrate. The well known traveler and musician Willie MacPhee told the story as a first-person narrative, as if the adventure had happened to him. In his telling, the hero tries to row the boat back to the shore when it is drifting out to the open sea, but to his surprise, he soon tires of the effort:

I couldnae get intae the shore an the waves were gettin bigger and my arms felt weak, I could hardly pull the oars.

"Goodness that's terrible," I says, "I'll need tae tak a smoke o ma pipe." So I pulled the oars in an put ma hand up tae get ma pipe, and I felt the big lump. "Hullo," I says, "What's wrong here?" I felt the other side. I had two big lumps! "Wait a minute," I says, "there's something cock-eyed here!" Instead o ma big auld jaicket, it was a woman's blouse that was on me. I put my hand up tae scart ma heid, and I felt beautiful long hair, right back like this. On ma legs, instead o troosers, it was a skirt that was on me. An something had gone, it was away! Replaced wi something else!²⁷

In Ireland, the protagonist meets a young man who falls in love with her; they marry and have children. One day as the young mother is out by the shore she sees the boat which brought her to Ireland. She gets in, the boat takes off to Scotland, and halfway across the sea the protagonist is once again turned into a man. When he enters the house, the people there have hardly noticed his absence.

The link between Scotland and the northern part of Ireland has always been particularly strong, and stories have always migrated backwards and forwards between the two countries with the same ease as the protagonist in the story.

A story told by Anna Nic an Luain in the famous collection of Donegal fairy legends, *Síscéalta Ó Thír Chonaill*, resembles the four Scottish legends in detail, except that it lacks the frame story.²⁸ The hero is sent out to get a pail of water to provide for some unexpected visitors. As he is standing near the

shore, he finds the waves rising towards him, and on them "the prettiest little boat he had ever seen" with "a little old red-haired man" in it "juggling with three yellow balls." The boat carries him off across the sea. When they reach land, he finds himself in woman's clothes, and plays a mother's role to an orphaned baby girl in the house where he finds shelter. After seven years, mother and child are picked up by the same boat and brought back.²⁹

Finally, the motif of the man who turns into a woman is found in some versions of another story about storytelling, *Pay Me For My Story*.³⁰ Like *The Man Who Had No Story*, it is about the necessity to reciprocate for a service rendered. In most versions this service is the telling of a story, but as we shall see, in some versions the service is the offer of a pipe full of tobacco which needs to be "paid" for. In all versions, however, the "payment" turns out to be not a materialist compensation, but a blessing. Twenty-four versions have been recorded, two of which are from Scotland.³¹ Hardly any versions of this beautiful little folktale have been published, and therefore I would like to take the opportunity here to quote in full two versions, as much for their own intrinsic value as their connection to the "Abbot of Druimenaig." Like *The Man Who Had No Story*, this story seems to be unique to Gaelic storytelling tradition. Here is a version from Mayo illustrating the main redaction which does not contain the gender-change motif:³²

Casadh fear le fear eile ar an mbóthar. D'inis sé scéal dó. Nuair a bhí an scéal instithe, "Íoc mé anois ar an scéal." "Níl aon cheo agam a thabhairt duit." "Déanfaidh mé gearrán bán dhíot"³³ go ceann lá agus bliain. Tiocfaidh mé ag an gcloch seo go bhfeicfidh mé an bhfuil tú in ann mé a íoc."

Rinne sé gearrán bán de. Bhí chuile dhuine ag dul ag marcaíocht air ag baint obair as agus á bhualadh. Tháinig sé ag an gcloch faoi cheann lá agus bliain.

"An bhfuil tú in ann mé a íoc anois?" adeir sé. "Níl mé in ann tú a íoc," a deir sé. "Déan rud éigin eile dhíom a thóghas den bhóthar mé." "Déanfaidh mé giorria dhíot go ceann lá agus bliain." Bhíodh na madraí agus na daoine ag fiach ina dhiaidh. Bhí sé marbh amach ó rachadh³⁴ ag iarraidh é féin a cumhdach.

Tháinig sé go³⁵ cloch aríst i gcionn lá agus bliain. "An bhfuil tú in ann mé a íoc anois?" a deir sé. "Níl mé in ann thú a íoc. Ach ar son Dé, déan rud eicint³⁶ dhíom a thóghas den talamh mé." "Déanfaidh mé seanphréacháin díot." Rinne sé é.

Tháinig lá mór fliuch. Luigh sé ar bharr simléir tí. Bhí fuacht air. Bhí fir sa teach. D'inis fear acu scéal. Nuair a bhí sé réidh leis an scéal, dúirt an fear eile "Beannacht Dé le hanam do mharbh."

"Anois," arsan préachán, "tá mé in ann an scéal a íoc." Chuaigh³⁷ sé ag an gcloch. "An bhfuil tú in ann mé a íoc anois?" arsa an fear. "Tás," adeir sé.

"Beannacht Dé le hanam do mharbh." "Dá n-abrófá sin fadó," a deir sé, "ní rachfá fríd an méid is chuaigh tú."

Sin é mo scéal.

A man met another man on the road. He told him a story. When the story was told, "Pay me now for my story." "I have nothing to give to you." "I'll make a white gelding of you for a year and a day. I shall come to this rock again to see whether you'll be able to pay me."

He made a white gelding of him. Everybody was going riding on him, working him and beating him. He came to the rock at the end of a year and a day.

"Are you able to pay me now?" said he. "I'm not able to pay you," he answered. "Make something else of me that would take me off the road!" "I'll make of you a hare for a year and a day." The dogs and the men were hunting after him. He was tired out from trying to hide himself.

He came to the rock again at the end of a year and a day. "Can you pay me now?" he said. "I can't pay you. But, for God's sake, turn me into something that would take me off the ground." "I'll turn you into an old crow." He did that.

There came a big wet day. He alighted on the top of the chimney of the house. He was cold. There were men inside the house. One of the men told a story. When he had finished the story, the other man said, "God's blessing on the souls of your dead."

"Now I know how to pay for the story," the crow said to himself. He went to the rock. "Can you pay me now?" the man asked. "I can," he answered, "God's blessing on the souls of your dead." "If you had said that before," he said, "you wouldn't have gone through everything you went through."

That's my story.³⁸

In ten Irish versions a distinct subpattern emerges, in which the hero not only changes species but gender. The shapes which the hero assumes are domestic, a mare, a bitch, and a woman. Here is an example of this subtype from the Dingle peninsula in south-west Kerry:³⁹

Do bhí fear ag gabháilt cóngar reilige oíche agus do bhí fear suite ar an gclai 7 é ag tarrac a phípe.⁴⁰

"Suigh anso," ar seisean,⁴¹ "7 tarraig⁴² cuid den bpíp so."

Do shuigh; oíche bhreá ghealaí. Nuair a bhí sé sásta den bpíp, shín sé chuige í.

"An bhfaighidh mé aon díol-fiach inti?" ar seisean.

"Cad é an díol-fiach a thabhairfainn duit?" arsa an fear. Tharraig sé le clabhta boise air 7 do dhein sé láir chapaill dé. Bhailigh⁴³ sé leis na capaill 7 bhí sé ag imeacht go raibh trí cinn de shearraigh aice. Ghaibh sé an tsíl aríst.

"Sea, an bhfuil aon díol-fiach agat dom anois?" arsa an fear.

"Níl," arsa an capall.

Tharraig sé le clabhta eile air 7 do dhein sé bean de. D'imigh sí 7 do bhí sí ag imeacht go raibh triúr mac aici. I gcinn áirithe aimsire ghaibh sí sa treo. Bhuail sé léi.

"Sea, an bhfuil aon díol-fiach anois agat dom?"

"Níl," arsa í san.

Tharraig sé le clabhta boise uirthi 7 dhein sé préachán di.

Bhí sí ina préachán ag imeacht ansan go raibh trí cinn de ghearraigh aici. Ach aon lá amháin bhí sí in airde ar shimne⁴⁴, 7 na sinneithe an uair san, chíféa an mhuintir a bheadh ar an dtinteán anuas. Ghaibh fear isteach. Do dhearg sé an phíp 7 do shín sé go dtí bean an tí í. Tharraig sí cúpla gal di 7 nuair a thug sí an phíp dó: "Beannacht Dé⁴⁵ dílis le t'anam is le hanamanna do mharbh," ar sise. Chonaic⁴⁶ an préachán an méid sin 7 i gcinn áirithe aimsire bhuail sé trasna ar an bhfear.

"Sea," arsan fear, "an bhfuil aon díol-fiach agat dom?"

"O, beannacht Dé dílis le t'anam," arsa é sin, "7 le hanamanna do mharbh."

"Is fada a thánn tú⁴⁷ ag imeacht," ar seisean, "gan aon díol a thabhairt dom. Táimid ar fad alright anois," ar seisean.

Dhein sé fear de. Tháinig sé abhaile. Bhí sé in am aige pósadh ansan. D'imigh sé, trí cinn de chapaill, triúr mac, na trí cinn de phréacháin. "Bhí triúr ar mhuin triúir 7 triúr lena gcois ag lorg bean dá máthair 7 a máthair lena gcois."

A man was going close by a graveyard one night, and a man was seated on the ditch, smoking his pipe.

"Sit down," he said, "and have a smoke of the pipe."

He sat down; it was a fine moonlit night. When he was done with the pipe, he gave it back to him.

"Will I get any payment for it?" said the other.

"What payment could I give you?" the man answered.

He gave him a blow with his hand and he made a mare of him. He went off with the horses, and stayed until he had three foals. He came back the way.

"Well, do you have any payment for me now?" asked the man.

"No," the horse answered.

He gave him another blow and he made a woman of him. She went off and stayed until she had three sons. After a certain time she went in that direction.

He met her.

"Well, do you have any pay for me now?"

"No," she replied.

He gave her a blow of the hand and he made a crow of her. She stayed a crow then until she had three fledglings. But one day, she was on top of a chimney; and the chimneys those days, you could see the people who were down by the fireplace. A man came in. He lit the pipe and gave it to the woman of the house. She smoked a couple of puffs, and when she gave him back the pipe she said: "Our dear Lord's blessing on your soul and on the souls of your dead."

The crow saw all that and after a certain time she met the man again.

"Well," said the man, "Do you have any payment for me now?"

"Oh, Our dear Lord's blessing on your soul," said the crow, "and on the souls of your dead."

"It's taken you a long time to pay me," said he, "but we're all set now," he said.

He made a man of him. He came home. It was time for him to marry then. He went out with three horses, three sons, and the three crows. "Three were riding three, and three were by their side, looking for a wife for their mother, and their mother by their side."⁴⁸

We can conclude that the Abbot of Druimenaig's adventure is a version of a traditional story-motif which we may call *The Man Who Becomes a Woman*, the same motif which also occurs in a couple of modern folk legends.⁴⁹ In all of the narratives we have looked at, a man is turned into a woman for an extended period of time. He gives birth to a child or children during that time, and is later restored to his original shape. The story's distribution seems to be limited to Ireland and Scotland; it does not seem to be found elsewhere.⁵⁰ It clearly belongs to the Gaelic language tradition of those countries; English-language versions are few and far between and in all probability go back to Irish or Scots Gaelic versions.⁵¹

Of the modern folk narratives, the Scottish versions of *The Man Who Had No Story* are clearly the closest match for "The Abbot of Druimenaig." In both cases, the focus is on the gender transformation with all its comic potential. The similarities even extend to details, as both narratives focus on clothes as symptoms of the change. And both share the same joke, as the hero receives gradual confirmation of his sex change, beginning with his clothes or hair and

ending with the most irrefutable piece of evidence.⁵² This is how the abbot experiences his transformation:

On his head there was a woman's hairdo, long golden very beautiful hair falling in fine curls from the top of his head, and when he passed his hand over his face he did not find any hair of a beard or mustache there, and he put his hand between his thighs and he found the sign of womanhood there.

And here, once again, is Willie MacPhee's lively first-person narrative:

I put my hand up tae scart ma heid, and I felt beautiful long hair, right back like this. On ma legs, instead o troosers, it was a skirt that was on me. An something had gone, it was away! Replaced wi something else!

It is clear that *The Man Who Became a Woman* was not originally a part of *The Man Who Had No Story*; the latter's open-ended frame attracted memorable anecdotes which were easily detachable. Presumably *The Man Who Became a Woman* was current as a separate narrative in Scotland and was then attached to the popular *The Man Who Had No Story*.⁵³

In the case of *Pay Me For My Story*, the gender-change motif was changed far more drastically in the process of integration. Here, the narrative had to be fitted, not into a loose frame tale, as with *The Man Who Had No Story*, but into a tightly structured plot. Originally, the story simply had a series of animal transformations, as, for instance, the horse, hare, and crow of the first version of *Pay Me For My Story*. Onto this was grafted the riddle motif of the three men on three horses looking for a wife for their mother. It is with this picture in mind that the transformation sequence was redesigned: the focus was no longer on the gender transformation itself, but on the outcome of that transformation, the offspring born to the hero, the horses, sons, and crows of the second version.⁵⁴ The change was probably motivated by the tendency, typical of Irish storytellers, to improve on a story by adding extra motifs, the combination of gender-change and riddle motif adding a further twist to the hero's misfortune.

Let us turn now to an assessment of the relationship between "The Abbot of Druimenaig" and the folk narratives. If they are, as I have suggested, versions of the same story,⁵⁵ there are two possibilities: either the oral folk legends are derived from the literary anecdote, or the anecdote is derived from an oral folk

legend, a prototype of *The Man Who Became a Woman* which was current in the Middle Ages.

There is no indication that the modern folk versions are at all dependent on the medieval literary version. There is no trace of the anecdote's monastic milieu, for instance, nor of the grotesque woman, and none of the modern versions contains the motif of sleeping on the fairy hill. The manuscript history of the "Abbot" does not make it likely that the folk versions are derived from the literary version. There are only four manuscript copies of the abbot's adventures, all of them medieval. The anecdote does not seem to have made its way into the more recent paper manuscript tradition, perhaps because it was felt to be somewhat outrageous. One eighteenth-century scholar provided the following colophon: *Bér úainn an sceol dona so siosana* 'Take away from us this bad story here.'⁵⁶

If the oral versions cannot be traced back to the literary anecdote, we must assume that the storytelling transmission worked the other way round. Presumably the story of *The Man Who Became a Woman* was current in Gaelic oral tradition in the fifteenth century, as it is now.

Bearing in mind the oral origin of "The Abbot of Druimenaig" may help us to arrive at a better understanding of the medieval story. Gaidoz has argued that elements which might seem strange or arbitrary become intelligible once they are put in the context of fairy belief and legend. Gaidoz pointed out that the "high pleasant hill" on which the hero is overcome by sleep and the grotesquely ugly woman are markers of fairy presence in the narrative.⁵⁷ To these we might add the sacred season during which the story is set, and finally the motif of "collapsible time": the abbot's adventure, including his giving birth to seven children, has apparently taken place in the space of one hour.

Fairy legends have morals. They are narratives packed with messages about societal norms and conventions, and about what happens to someone who breaks these norms. *The Man Who Became a Woman* is a narrative about someone who has committed just such a breach of norms, and whose transgression can only be remedied by his being subjected to the ultimate transgression of a gender change. There can be no doubt that the hero's transformation is intended, and understood, as a punishment, the perfect counterpart of the miracle performed by St Abban over the baptismal font. If a woman is turned into a man, it is a miracle; if a man, on the other hand, is turned into a woman, it is a disaster. For the hero, to be a woman is the ultimate humiliation, entailing not only a loss of power, but also subjection to the biological burden of pregnancy and birth. The narrative is unequivocally constructed from the man's point of view: the male hero is the personification of the narrative consciousness. However, *The Man Who Became a Woman* is

not merely an endorsement of male perspective: it is as popular with women narrators as with their male colleagues. Some of the best versions are by women storytellers such as Bessie Whyte and Anna Nic an Luain, who take delight in the story's comic potential. The story demands an imaginative experiment of the storytellers and their audience, both male and female. By identifying with the genderbending hero, men imagine what it is like to become a woman and a mother, while women imagine what it must be like for a man to become a woman. The gender change motif is a particularly daring mental experiment, enacting a role reversal in the rigid gender division of traditional Gaelic society. The hero's gender change is not merely a humiliating punishment. It is also an opportunity for the hero to overcome his previous failing, and remedy his lack. Interestingly, when the hero is changed back into his original shape, his reaction is less than jubilant: "O powerful God," the abbot exclaims when he is restored to his original appearance, "the lamenting in which I am is great." And the hero of Bessie Whyte's narrative is "howling an greetin an pullin his hair an tearin himsel," crying "ma man an ma bairns, ma man an ma bairns."⁵⁸ The Man Who Became a Woman is a complex statement about gender, a temporary role reversal of the imagination, which questions, as well as endorses, gender roles and gender evaluations.

In the modern versions the hero's transformation is a punishment for lack of proper behavior, lack of knowledge of societal etiquette, a failure to fulfill the social contract. The failure may be not knowing how to tell a story, as in *The Man Who Had No Story*, or not knowing how to give thanks for a story, as in *Pay Me For My Story*. Even the story from *Síscéalta* provides us with a clue as to the hero's failing:

Bhí fear ann fad ó shin, agus bliain amháin bhí mórán arbhair curtha aige. D'éirigh sé mall air le baint an arbhair, agus d'iarr sé meitheal fá choinne an tSathairn a bhí ag teacht. Ní tháinig leis na fir a theacht ar an tSatharn, agus thosaigh siad a theacht ar an Luan agus gan iad réidh fána gcoinne. Ní raibh a sáith aráin déanta acu; agus arán mine coirce uilig a bhí ag gabháil san am. Ní raibh an t-uisce féin istigh, agus d'iarr an cailín ar fhear an toighe a ghabháil amach agus stópa uisce a thbhairt chuici as an tsileán a bhí ag teacht anuas fá ghiota den teach.

There was a man long ago and one year he had planted a lot of corn. It was getting late for reaping, and he engaged a group of reapers for the following Saturday. The men could

not come on Saturday and so they arrived on Monday and nothing was prepared for them. There was not enough bread made for them, and it was all oatmeal bread at that time. Even the water had not been brought in. The maid asked the man of the house to go out and bring in a pail of water from the stream which came down near the house.⁵⁹

To invite a *meitheal*, a seasonal worker's cooperative, without being properly equipped to feed them, without even having the most basic staples, such as oatmeal bread or water, in the house to welcome them, is behavior deserving of censorship and correction.

What then is the Abbot of Druimenaig's failing? He himself clearly feels blameless and hard done by:

... and he raised a sore lament and a heavy sorrowful cry and this is what he said going down the hill: "Pity," he said, "that the earth of the hill does not swallow me up this very moment, because I do not know whither I will go or what I will do."

The abbot's failure may have been a failure to recognize that he was transgressing across the threshold to the otherworld. The hero is out alone on a fairy hill at a sacred time of year, and worse still, he is out after sunset. Fairy punishment may appear arbitrary, but usually it confirms an injunction to observe the rules and regulations that keep the boundaries between the two worlds intact. If you fall asleep on a fairy hill, especially at a sacred time of year, and more especially after sunset, you are asking for trouble. "Il arrive toujours quelque chose de désagréable à celui qui s'arrête sur le *Fairy-Mound* ... plus encore à qui s'y asseoit! Et malheur surtout à qui s'y endort!"⁶⁰

"The Abbot of Druimenaig" is not the only medieval Irish anecdote that seems to have its roots in oral fairy legend. There is a considerable number of monastic legends which have not so far been discussed in context, due to the fact that they are scattered throughout the manuscripts, and tend to get lost or overlooked alongside the longer and more famous tales. Editions and translations appear correspondingly scattered in various journals and anthologies, such as the *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts* which contains Meyer's edition of "The Abbot of Druimenaig." It might be well worth looking at such monastic legends in context. There is, for instance, a cluster of stories surrounding the famous monastic settlement at Clonmacnoise, including the story treated by John Carey about a ship that was seen sailing in the air above

the monastery.⁶¹ Also associated with Clonmacnoise is the story of how the poet Airbertach Mac Coise witnessed a fairy burial in close proximity to the monastery.⁶²

The monastic *scriptoria* could apparently accommodate narratives rooted in fairy belief. It might be tempting to interpret this as further evidence for 'pagan' survival in Christian Ireland. However, the perception of fairy belief and Christianity as conflicting ideologies may be entirely in the eyes of the beholder. Fairy belief has, after all, successfully coexisted with a devout brand of Catholicism in Ireland up to the present day. Their relatively peaceful coexistence indicates that far from being competing ideologies, they fulfill very different functions, each having its own sphere of influence and potency. It might be helpful to stress the overlap between fairy legends and Christian religious legends. All legends, Christian or otherwise, are about a confrontation with the otherworld, about supernatural intervention, divine or otherwise, and, in that sense, monastic legends such as "The Abbot of Druimenaig" fit in well with the hagiographical and apocryphal material that surrounds them in the manuscripts.⁶³

We can conclude that the story of The Man Who Became a Woman has been known in Ireland for at least half a millennium. It entered the monastic life from oral fairy lore, and was preserved in the literary tradition along with other monastic marvels. It owed its literary life to a religious ideology which was less censorious than one might expect. Ultimately, however, it owes its survival in both the written and the oral tradition neither to paganism nor to Christianity, but simply to its being an unforgettable story, worthy of gaining a wider circle of admirers.

Barbara Hillers
Harvard University

NOTES

¹ James Carney, *Studies in Irish History and Literature* (Dublin, 1955), 277.

² The offices of both abbot and erenagh could be, and often were, held by laymen.

³ In *Onomasticon Goedelicum* (Dublin, 1910), 363, E. Hogan lists as many as 16 Druim Eanaigh's.

⁴ Vide Henri Gaidoz, "Du changement de sexe dans les contes celtiques," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 57 (1908), 317-32: "Les deux localités mentionnées dans ce récit, comme pour le rendre plus vraisemblable, se trouvent dans le comté de Dublin, et proches de cette ville et s'appellent aujourd'hui Drimnagh et Crumlin" (320). Robin Flower, who does not seem to have been aware of Gaidoz's translation and discussion of the legend, also identifies Druimenaig with "Drimnagh, Co. Dublin" in *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum II* (London, 1926), 542.

⁵ Egerton 1781, f. 149 b; Additional 30512, f. 10 b; Rawlinson B 512, f. 140; Book of Fermoy, f. 72 a, col. 1, l. 11. On the relationship between the MSS, vide R. Flower, op. cit., 542.

⁶ *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts I* (Dublin, 1907), 76-9.

⁷ I have not yet had the chance to consult the MSS, but hope to do so in the future.

⁸ Op. cit., 475 (Additional 30512), and 542 (Egerton 1781).

⁹ *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, XXV (Dublin, 1940), 3105.

¹⁰ Gaidoz, 317-32.

¹¹ I am grateful to Professor Ó Corráin for this reference.

¹² Vide *Folk-Lore* 42 (1932), 216 and *Journal of American Oriental Society* 47:1, 3-24.

¹³ C. Plummer, *Lives of the Irish Saints II*, 8. For the Latin life, see *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae I*, 19.

¹⁴ In the Irish Life of St Gerald, the miracle is attributed to Gerald, with an additional twist: the king's only daughter dies, and in his desperate need for a male heir he pretends to the saint that his "son" has died, and entreats him to resuscitate "him." The saint of course suspects the truth, but when the king sticks to his story, the saint replies, *Licet sit*

natus vel nata, Deus ... masculum rescitare dignetur. The saint accordingly brings the child back to life, transformed into a boy, to the great contentment of the king who calls this son Catholus. "Vita Sancti Geraldii," (*Vitae Sanctorum Hibernae*, §v, 109f).

¹⁵ In an early Irish genealogy there is a mention of a certain Loingseach, who was born a girl and was transformed into a boy during baptism through the blessing of Bishop Cathub. M. E. Dobbs, "The History of the Descendants of Ir," *ZCP* 13 (1921), 308-59; *vide esp.* 358. Although most of the genealogy is in Irish, this particular episode is in Latin. A Cathub who was Bishop of Achad Cinn in Antrim died in 554. Loingsech's mother is said to be a daughter of the British King Vortigern. Obviously, the historicity of this section of the genealogy is rather dubious.

¹⁶ In modern folk tradition, the miracle is attributed to St Brendan of Clonfert. *Vide* "Naomh Brenainn Cluain Fearta agus Ceap-Sinsear na Máilleach," Pádraig Ó Moghráin, *Béaloideas* 22 (1953), 154-90.

¹⁷ In the religious legends, the otherworld intervention is performed by God, through the mediation of the saint. Its purpose is to reward the saint's patron, and to further increase the king's regard for the saint, as is implied by the concluding sentence of Abban's miracle, "Abban and the king parted in great amity."

¹⁸ Homer, Aeschylus, Apollodorus, Diodorus, Hyginus, Pausanias, Pindar, Sophocles, Statius and Ovid tell this story.

¹⁹ *Vide* Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 316-38.

²⁰ T. Benfey, *Pantschatantra* I (Leipzig, 1859), 41f. Cf. Gaidoz, *op. cit.*, 331.

²¹ Flower, *op. cit.* 542. J. A. Macculloch, *The Childhood of Fiction* (New York, 1905), 157.

²² Gaidoz has pointed out the episode from the Welsh *Mabinogi* as an example of a combination of animal and gender transformation. In the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*, Math enchants his nephews Gwydion and Gilfaethwy as punishment for a sexual transgression. They are turned into, first, a hind and stag, then a sow and boar, and finally a she-wolf and wolf, switching gender each time they take a new shape. As Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are brothers, the offspring they beget between them in each of these shapes is incestuous, further adding to their humiliation. Another example of the combination of shape shifting and gender change is the story of Loki and Svaðilfari told in Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda. In order to prevent the giant builder from completing his work, Loki turns himself into a mare and in that shape lures away the builder's supernatural horse Svaðilfari. Loki's ploy is successful, and without his horse the builder fails to accomplish his goal; but "Loki had had such dealings with Svaðilfari that some time later

he bore a foal. It was grey and had eight legs, and this horse is the best among gods and men." (*Gylfaginning*, ch. 42).

²³ There are, however, a number of intriguing short references and allusions. The *Rennes Dindsenchas* mentions three daughters of Daire Léith, Doe, Caechne, and Fadat, who were turned into men when bathing in a lake. Two episodes from the Fenian tradition found in nineteenth-century MSS may be more closely related to our "Abbot." In *Feis Tighe Chonáin Chinn-Shléibhe*, Fionn Mac Cumhail lists some marvels at his court; one is "a strange wonder, namely, a certain man who is each alternate year a male and female: children are born to him while a male, and he himself bears children while a female" *Atá iongna eile ann, éadon, duine áirighthe bhíos gach re mbliaghain firrionn agus buinionn; agus bearthar clann do an bhliaghain bhíos firrionn; agus beiridh féin clann an bhliaghain bhíos iona mhnaoi*, ed. N. O'Kearney, *Trans. Ossian. Soc. II* (Dublin, 1855), 146f. In a nineteenth-century paper MS, another humorous Fenian lay tells of "a trick played on Conán, and how in punishment for his misbehavior he was changed into a woman," *Catalogue of Irish MSS in RIA III*, ed. M. E. Byrne, 307.

²⁴ Vide Elena O'Malley's contribution to the present volume, based on her 1994 Harvard undergraduate thesis *A Story to Wake the Dead: Tracing the Historical and Cultural Roots of the Fairy Legend The Man Who Had No Story*. Vide also Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, *The Types of the Irish Folktale 2412 B (i) The Man Who Had No Story, and 2412 B (ii) Memory Fails the Storyteller*, unpublished BA thesis, University College Dublin (1979), and "The Man Who Had No Story," *Sinsear: The Folklore Journal* (1980), 115-22. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Elena O'Malley for giving me the occasion to work with her on "The Man Who Had No Story," and Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh for generously sharing his research with us.

²⁵ These are SA 1953/102/2 (Scots Gaelic) told by Duncan Cameron from Loeb; SA 1976/158/b3 (Scots Gaelic), told by Donald MacLean; SA 1973/162/4 and SA 1976/219/9 told by Bessie Whyte (Scots), a traveler who had settled down in Montrose. Bessie Whyte's version was discussed and quoted in full by Alan Bruford, in "Some Aspects of the Otherworld," *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Centenary Conference of the Folklore Society*, ed. V. J. Newall (Totowa, N.J., 1980), 149f. Another Scots version, "The Man Who Had No Story To Tell," told by the well-known storyteller and traveller Willie MacPhee, has been published in S. Douglas, *The King o the Black Art and Other Folktales* (Aberdeen, 1987), 67-9.

²⁶ Bruford, op. cit., 149.

²⁷ Douglas, op. cit., 68.

²⁸ Eds. S. Ó hEochaidh, M. Mac Neill and S. Ó Catháin (Dublin, 1977), "Ciapógaí an Aistir Amach," told by Anna Nic an Luain from Cruach Thobraid in the Bluestack

Mountains (#120, 286-91; originally Irish Folklore Commission 1667: 181-3). Anna Nic an Luain contributed four other narratives to the anthology, and the editors included a photograph of her in tribute to that contribution (Plate IV).

²⁹ The legend then adds another adventure (motif F571.3 Very Old Woman, and F571.4 Man/Woman so old s/he sleeps in cradle).

³⁰ "Pay Me For My Story: The Etiquette of Storytelling," Barbara Hillers and Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, *Sinsear: The Folklore Journal* 6 (1990), 50-60.

³¹ All but five are in Irish or Scots Gaelic. Most of the Irish versions are unpublished, in the archives of the Irish Folklore Commission housed in the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin.

³² *IFC* 71: 177-9. Told by Tomás Risteárd, Baile an Átha, Lios na hUisce, Baile an Róba, Co. Mayo. The story was originally recorded in phonetic script. Printed by kind permission of Professor Bo Almqvist, Head of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin.

³³ The preposition *de*, along with its pronominal forms, and in combination with the article is always lenited in Connacht pronunciation. Thus, where the phonetic transcript has *gim*, *git*, etc., I have written *dhíom*, *dhíot*, etc.

³⁴ The MS has *ræche/richa*.

³⁵ The MS has *g'e klox*. The prepositions *do*, *de* and *go* are all pronounced [*g'e*] in Connacht, but as we would expect a lenition of the noun after *do* and *de*, the preposition intended here must be *go*.

³⁶ The MS has *ek'in'*, which seems to be halfway between the *caighdeán* spelling *éigin*, and the form usual in Connacht *eicint*.

³⁷ The MS spelling, *fue*, reflects the dialect pronunciation.

³⁸ My translation.

³⁹ Told by Seán Crithin, 67, a small farmer from Cillmaolcéadair, Corca Dhuibhne, who had heard the story from his father. Collected by full-time collector Seosamh Ó Dálaigh on the ediphone March 11, 1945. Printed by kind permission of Professor Bo Almqvist, Head of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin.

⁴⁰ The word for "pipe" does not appear in its standard form, *an píopa*, but as a feminine noun *an phíp* (cf. *an phíb*, used of musical pipes), with a genitive *na pípe*.

⁴¹ The MS has *ars é sin*.

⁴² In Munster pronunciation *tarraingim* [tarig'im] 'I draw, pull,' falls together in most forms with *tairgim* 'I offer,' vn. *tairiscint*, except in the vn. which has a special form *tarrac*. In the MS the forms appear as *tairrig* (Imperative) and *thairrig* (Past).

⁴³ *Bhailibh* in MS.

⁴⁴ Variant of *simléar*, 'chimney.' *Simneithe* is evidently a plural formation.

⁴⁵ MS has *Dia*.

⁴⁶ The MS seems to have *chinibh*. The context strongly suggests a form of the verb *chím* (*feicim*) 'I see.'

⁴⁷ = *Atá tú*. Note the lenition of *tánn* after the relative particle.

⁴⁸ My translation.

⁴⁹ The question raises itself whether our narrative should be called a motif or a story. It has been assigned the motif number D12 in Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington and Helsinki, 1932ff); *vide* also T. P. Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* (Bloomington, 1952), 104. D10-12 deal with magic gender transformations; D11 lists female to male, D12 male to female transformations. However, the mere fact of gender change clearly does not adequately define the story. In fact, The Man Who Becomes a Woman can claim enough of a plot to warrant being classified as a story in its own right, specifically a migratory legend. "The Abbot of Druimenaig" is proof that the story can stand alone, although in modern tradition it always occurs in combination with other stories. This, I suggest, is due to the tendency of the Gaelic storyteller to elaborate and enhance stories by combining stories and motifs.

⁵⁰ One reason why it would not be included in international type indices.

⁵¹ Bruford suggests as much in the case of Bessie Whyte; although Bessie tells her story in Scots, her mother was a Gaelic speaker from Argyll (Bruford, *op. cit.*, 150).

⁵² The same joke seems to be used, albeit less explicitly, by Bessie Whyte in her description of the protagonist's second transformation. Halfway back to Scotland, the young woman is changed back into a man: "... she looks doon, and there's this auld

tackety boots, all dirty dung; cord troosers; and this auld jacket, moleskin jacket. And, 'Oh my God,' he says, 'whit's this? Whit's this?'"

⁵³ Nor does it appear to have ousted earlier episodes in Scotland. Of the nine Scottish versions, only four contain *The Man Who Became a Woman*; the others contain episodes which are much more like those in the Irish versions of *The Man Who Had No Story*. The story from Donegal which lacks the narrative frame of *The Man Who Had No Story*, seems to present just such a separate story as might have given rise to it being incorporated. On the other hand, the Donegal story might simply be a version of *The Man Who Had No Story* which lost its frame story.

⁵⁴ The combination of animal and gender transformation calls to mind the stories cited in note 22.

⁵⁵ There are, of course, considerable differences between the medieval and the modern versions. To take one example, in the modern versions there is no trace of a monastic milieu. However, these differences are clearly due to the change in milieu and medium; the basic story line is the same.

⁵⁶ This gloss (on folio 10 b) was written by Charles O'Connor of Belanagar, who read Additional MS 30512 and made occasional comments in Irish.

⁵⁷ Op. cit., 325ff. The role of the ugly woman, which Flower calls "inconsequent" (op. cit., 542), is clearly to emphasize fairy influence in the legend.

⁵⁸ Bruford, op. cit., 150.

⁵⁹ *Síscéalta Ó Thír Chonaill*, 286f.

⁶⁰ 'Something unpleasant always happens to the one who stops on the Fairy-Mound, much more to the one who sits down there. And misfortune moreover to the one who falls asleep there!' Gaidoz, op. cit., 325.

⁶¹ John Carey, "Aerial Ships and Underwater Monasteries: The Evolution of a Monastic Marvel," *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 12, 16-28.

⁶² Edited by Kuno Meyer under the title 'Elfenbegräbnis,' *ZCP* VIII, 559-60, and translated by L. Gwynn, "An Old Irish Giant Tale," *Irish Monthly* XLII (1914), 640-5. More recently, John Carey translates and discusses the text in a paper entitled "The Finding of Arthur's Grave: A Story from Clonmacnoise?" (1995, unpublished conference paper).

⁶³ In the Book of Fermoy, for instance, the anecdote is surrounded by saints' lives and apocryphal material relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Last Judgment.



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THE IMPERIAL FEMININE IN BYZANTIUM*

Ever since Edward Gibbon wrote his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* the phrase has captured a vital process in the historical development of Europe. It is often forgotten that he went on to chronicle the history of the East Roman Empire, which we call Byzantium, through its millennial existence right up to its final conquest by the Ottoman Turks. By extending his definition of 'Roman', Gibbon effectively wrote a history of the East Mediterranean to the middle of the fifteenth century. He found the eastern Romans of the Middle Ages, centred on their capital Constantinople, an effete and ineffectual lot. He was particularly offended by the promotion of some of the wives of emperors to equal positions of authority. In contrast, his enthusiasm for the Arab tribes who entered the historical arena in the seventh century is unmistakable — here at last, he implies, were some vigorous warriors, inspired by the genius of their prophet Muhammad, their religious dedication and military ability.¹

Despite many efforts to correct Gibbon's vivid account, his view of Byzantium still informs both scholarly and popular awareness. This is particularly unfortunate in respect of his treatment of imperial women from Theodora in the sixth century to Irene in the eighth and on to Anne of Savoy in the fourteenth, though he praises Eudokia Makrembolitissa and Anna Komnene as educated females.² His presentation requires radical rethinking. Some notable contributions have already set the achievements of outstanding women associated with supreme power in Byzantium in a more satisfying context.³ The purpose of this article is to

* This text is closely based on my inaugural lecture delivered at King's College, London, on 24 March 1998. It has been much improved by the comments of Leslie Brubaker, Janet Nelson and Chris Wickham. I also thank Anthony Barnett for his critical and constructive reading of many versions.

¹ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, revised edn by J. B. Bury, 7 vols. (London, 1909–14), ch. 50 (v, 339–95).

² *Ibid.*, ch. 40 (iv, 226–33, on Theodora); chs. 48 and 53 (v, 200–4, 295–6, Eirene); ch. 53 (v, 238, and vi, 111, Eudokia and Anna); and ch. 63 (vi, 517, 519–21, 523–7, Anne of Savoy).

³ In particular, Liz James has analysed the presence of female rulers in images and questioned the general assumption that they were powerless: see her 'Goddess, Whore,

analyse the cultural heritage, the imperial precedents and variety of visual models on which such powerful Byzantine empresses could draw. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that by the eighth and ninth centuries there were significant resources available which might permit imperial authority to adopt feminine forms.

The reason for this chronological framework lies in the prominence of two empresses, Irene and Theodora, during the periods of iconoclasm (roughly calculated from 730 to 843). Both reversed bans imposed on the veneration of icons. Irene set a precedent by summoning the Seventh Oecumenical Council held in 787, which justified icons and restored them to a central position in the church, while Theodora is commemorated as a saint for her role in ending the second phase of iconoclasm in 843. The belief of icon venerators (iconophiles) that prayers addressed to an image are transmitted to the venerated saint or holy person depicted on it (the prototype) had long been established. St Basil of Caesarea first developed it, probably from pre-Christian imperial traditions, though it was not until the seventh century that devotional practices intensified the cult. When and how this theology was matched by paintings that can be historically documented is much debated. Whether women played a significant role in promoting the cult of such images is similarly disputed. Probably women did not introduce any novel aspects into the practice of venerating icons. But they may have found it particularly satisfying, because it did not require the services of a priest, or the context of a church; icons could be venerated at home in the privacy of female domestic space.⁴

This is an obvious point. In the context of an utterly patriarchal society, women's activity was necessarily restricted. By the seventh century, icon veneration was a practice sanctioned like most ecclesiastical rituals by the male clergy who ran the church. Through their personal devotions women reproduced it. But when the equally patriarchal imperial system turned against it,

(n. 3 cont.)

Wife or Slave? Will the Real Byzantine Empress Please Stand Up?', in Anne J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 1997).

⁴ Judith Herrin, 'Women and the Faith in Icons in Early Christianity', in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London, 1982); Alexander Kazhdan and Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Women and Icons', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, lxxxv-lxxxvi (1991-2); Peter Hatlie, 'Women of Discipline in the Second Iconoclast Age', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, lxxxix (1996).

women persisted in this once-dominant tradition.⁵ Even as the male authorities decreed otherwise, they actively resisted the policy of iconoclasm, hiding icons in their private quarters, and instructing their children in the rituals of veneration. These women were, so to speak, the preservers of a tradition that had previously been overseen by men. In their efforts to sustain iconophile belief, empresses especially, as well as many anonymous women and men, contributed to the survival of Byzantium as we know it, and therefore to its revival and the great medieval flowering of its artistic and intellectual achievements.

The exceptional history of this turning point and the contribution of the empresses to it demands extensive treatment.⁶ But it also poses a preliminary question. How did these two empresses muster the skills, determination and means to play the role they did? There must have been resources in the interstices of Byzantine society, in myths, in liturgical practice and religious beliefs, and the symbols surrounding them, which they could draw upon. Such resources — which I will term the ‘imperial feminine’ — are indeed found in a rich vein of traditions, images and customs, which all manifest a relationship of women with authority and power; in a subordinate and supporting role, to be sure, but one that was nonetheless imperial. So the title of this article does not reflect the role of the empresses of the iconoclast era, rather it addresses activities and representations dating from the fifth to the seventh centuries, which created a potential that later female rulers could exploit.

Three dynamic strands of this imperial feminine may be singled out. The first lies in the late antique transition from a Roman to a Christian society, which witnesses the introduction of the Virgin as a novel symbol of maternity into an environment dominated visually by pagan monuments. It develops in symbiosis with imperial and civic rites into a powerful new cult. The second springs from the process of adapting imperial structures to accommodate the needs of dynasty and inherited claims to rule, necessarily transmitted by women. And the third, and perhaps most crucial element, lies in the development of New Rome,

⁵ For a critical appraisal, see Robin Cormack, ‘Women and Icons, and Women in Icons’, in Liz James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* (London, 1997), esp. 31–5, who misreads the argument as claiming that women created icon worship.

⁶ See my forthcoming study, *Women in Purple* (London, 2001).

Constantinople, the eastern capital of the empire, where imperial and public space, court structures and rituals allowed ruling women to elaborate new roles. From the intersection of elements of these three strands the feminine is frequently associated with imperial power. This is a discontinuous phenomenon rather than any systematic combination. But it seems to have legitimized female access to an autocratic use of power and it revealed and preserved spaces (political and geographical), which women could utilize. It neither encouraged nor forbade this access. Rather, in exceptional circumstances, precedents in image and story permitted women to adopt a 'male' exploitation of forces within the imperial court.

FROM ROMAN TO CHRISTIAN BYZANTIUM

A) PAGAN PRESENCE

I shall begin with an obvious but often overlooked visual presence: the existence in Byzantium of numerous images of empresses. In the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, a strange collection of stories about the monuments of medieval Constantinople, there are many references to statues of Helena, the mother of Constantine I. Among the eighty Christian statues redistributed around the city by Justinian, there were three of Helena: 'one of porphyry and [other] marbles, another with silver inlay on a bronze column and the other of ivory'.⁷ Several composite statues of Helena and Constantine together, often holding the True Cross, also adorned the capital city (for example, at the Forum of Constantine; at the Milion; at the Senate House, one in porphyry; at the Forum Bovis; and at the Philadelphion). Helena is the first in a long line of mothers, sisters, daughters and wives of emperors commemorated in porphyry, bronze, silver and marble, who were understood as powerful women.⁸

Theodore the Lector's 'Brief Catalogue of Women', which is only known because it was included in the *Parastaseis*, records the survival of statues of two near-contemporaries of Helena: Fausta and Anastasia, the unhappy spouses of Constantine I and Julian. The largest number represented women of the ruling

⁷ *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, ed. Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin (Leiden, 1984; hereafter *Constantinople*), para. 11 (70–2).

⁸ *Ibid.*, paras. 16, 34, 43, 52, 58 (78, 94, 118–20, 126, 134); Leslie Brubaker, 'Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', in James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs*.

dynasties of the fifth to eighth centuries and were often in group sculptures: Eudoxia and her daughters; Pulcheria with her husband Marcian; Verina, wife of Leo I; Arcadia and Ariadne, wives of Zeno; Euphemia; Eudokia; Sophia and her daughter Arabia and niece Helena; Justinian and Theodora, and their homonyms, Justinian II and his wife Theodora. This last one stood at the Basilika, a place where Theodora's Khazar relatives and their Bulgarian allies received payment of tribute during Justinian II's second reign (705–11), and it is identified by this topographical association.⁹ Although the emperor was remembered as a tyrant, the compilers of the *Parastaseis* believed that he had commemorated his triumphant return to imperial power in this group statue. Previous commentators, however, had identified it as Byzas and Phidaleia, the mythical founders of Byzantium. So there was much doubt as to the actual rulers depicted. The problem is recognized by the compilers of the *Parastaseis*, who emphasize that these statues were still visible at the time of writing (*heos tes semeron*), and could be inspected by those who wished to understand ancient monuments.¹⁰

Among the famous statues mentioned in the text, one reveals a distinct exercise of female agency. From a notorious incident that occurred at the end of the fourth century, we know that a silver statue of the empress Eudoxia was set up on a porphyry column in the Augousteion close to the cathedral church, when John Chrysostom was bishop. It commemorated her acclamation as *augusta* (empress) and was inaugurated 'with applause and popular spectacles of dances and mimes, as was then customary on the erection of the statues of the emperors'.¹¹ Sozomen and Socrates report the protests made by the bishop at the openly pagan celebrations which accompanied the statue's installation. Whether this was in fact a cause of John's clash with the empress or not, the discovery of the base and the survival of a bilingual Greek and Latin inscription provide independent confirmation of Eudoxia's statue.¹² It was not the only statue of her: Theodore

⁹ *Constantinople*, paras. 29–37 (92–8); Albrecht Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos* (Bonn, 1988), 420, on Justinian II.

¹⁰ *Constantinople*, para. 37 (100. 17).

¹¹ Sozomen, VIII, 20; cf. Socrates, VI, 18; J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom — Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London, 1995), 238–40.

¹² *Constantinople*, 206–7; Florent van Ommeslaeghe, 'Jean Chrysostome en conflit avec l'impératrice Eudoxie: le dossier et les origines d'une légende', *Analecta Bollandiana*, xcvi (1979); Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), 69–78; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin*

also records a very large one in silver (of Eudoxia with her daughters), another in bronze on a pillar.¹³

Later Christian commentators were clearly aware of the scandal connected with this statue. Eudoxia was gratified by its erection, and the festive accompaniments were part of the tradition of raising statues on columns, the ancient commemoration of rulers. The incident serves as a reminder of the pre-Christian traditions of the East Roman Empire which survived, albeit in different forms, into the medieval period, while they fell away in the West. The tension resulting from two quite different styles of public commemoration, one imperial and associated with ancient customs, the other religious and devoted to the invisible Christian God, characterized Byzantium to the very end.

In medieval Constantinople, therefore, there was a continuing presence of commemorations of empresses; they were a notable reminder of the power and prominence of certain imperial women, whether carved in very valuable marble or cast in precious metal. Some were attached to public monuments, others stood at major intersections, most were identified by inscription, like Eudoxia's.¹⁴ Even though they were certainly outnumbered by statues of male rulers, there was no shortage of representations of imperial authority in feminine form in medieval Constantinople. Writers also thought them worthy of note and recorded their existence in such lists. And because they depicted individuals, accurately named and connected with imperial activities, there was less possibility of confusing them with statues of ancient goddesses or the Muses, traditionally shown in ancient costume with their attributes, which also continued to decorate the cites of late antiquity.

The importance of these statues is that they were of actual, historical characters. In addition, of course, there were the

(n. 12 cont.)

and the *Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 17–19; Kate Cooper, 'Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins and Pulcheria's *Imitatio Mariae*', *Scot. Jl Relig. Studies*, xix (1998), esp. 35. The eighth-century compilers of the *Parastaseis* note the connection with John's downfall without going into any detail of Eudoxia's role in it. They thus preserve a different rhetorical narrative from those analysed by Kate Cooper. It has been suggested that the statue might not have survived the fire of 532 that destroyed the centre of Constantinople during the Nika riot: see Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos*, 395–6; but the compilers of the *Parastaseis* were sure they knew about Eudoxia's statues.

¹³ *Constantinople*, para. 31 (92. 18–20).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, paras. 38, 40, 65, 80–1 (102. 16–17, 110. 16–17, 146. 16–19, 158. 15–16, 21–2) for problems of deciphering inscriptions experienced by the compilers.

familiar tropes of the female figure as an allegory, a typical device whereby the feminine figure serves to naturalize male authority.¹⁵ In this category there is one peculiar imperial association of female allegory: the image of an empress on the steelyard, or measuring arm. On this everyday object in common daily use an imperial figure, frequently feminine, represented the ruling power. Steelyards were used for measuring fairly small quantities (up to four Roman pounds), possibly rather valuable commodities such as spices or precious metals.¹⁶ In this guise the imperial responsibility for overseeing correct measurement is personified by a female figure who embodies the guarantee of accuracy and an assurance of good measure. Very large numbers are found at many late antique sites scattered throughout the empire. On rare occasions, male emperor weights were also used or Athena was represented.¹⁷ But the overriding association of correct weight is with an imperial feminine. A similar connection occurs on miniature statuettes of imperial virtue, some female, others male, which encouraged private devotion to the imperial cult.¹⁸

Such weights are sometimes identified not as empresses but as embodiments of the city of Constantinople, a further confusion between different forms of power. And flat weights also display the *Tyche* or Fortune of a ruling city.¹⁹ But the city of Constantinople, also characterized by the adjective *basilissa*, which may also be translated ruling city, queen city, or queen of cities, is traditionally represented as a female personification — as for

¹⁵ Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London, 1985), esp. 18–37, 124–6.

¹⁶ Alexander Kazhdan et al. (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1994), iii, 2194–5; Norbert Franken, *Aequipondia: Figürliche Laufgewichte römischer und frühbyzantinischer Schnellwaagen* (Alfter, 1994), 15–16, 171–81. In late antiquity these weights tend to be more female than male, and busts rather than heads as in the Hellenistic period.

¹⁷ James, 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?', esp. 133, and pl. 10; Ludwig Wamser and Gisela Zahlhaas (eds.), *Rom und Byzanz* (Munich, 1998), nos. 217 (Athena), 221, 224–6 (empresses), 218–19 (emperors). See also David Buckton (ed.), *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London, 1994), nos. 109–10, a steelyard balance and a weight, representing the Emperor Phokas (602–10), both of the seventh century.

¹⁸ Archer St Clair, 'Imperial Virtue: Questions of Form and Function in the Case of Four Late Antique Statuettes', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, li (1996).

¹⁹ Kazhdan et al. (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, iii, 2194–5. But in fact the personification most commonly represented on weights is *Moneta*, holding cornucopias and scales: see Simon Bendell, *Byzantine Weights: An Introduction* (Lennox Gallery, London, 1996), nos. 5, 7–12, 14; cf. no. 53, *Tyche* flanked by emperors (the only example).

example on the Esquiline treasure, which also has representations of other ancient cities.²⁰ The Byzantine metropolis continued to be depicted in this way throughout its history, with specific ideological resonance for empresses. While the other capitals lost all physical reality and thus became nothing but allegories, new urban foundations, though just as feminine, could make no claim to the ruling epithet. Although there should have been ways of distinguishing the symbolic person of the capital city from the person of a female imperial portrait, the confusion between the two remained. And only Constantinople sustained its peculiar character in visual forms which could be used to strengthen the idea of a female ruler.

So a female figure associated with accurate measurement, looking like an empress or labelled with the name of an ancient city of great renown, enhanced the imperial feminine. Such personifications of Constantinople in clearly female form survive from the fourth century, and New Rome is clearly distinguished from Old Rome by attributes that reflect their position and character.²¹ The twin capitals have different helmets; Old Rome is traditionally shown with her right breast bare (not a characteristic confined to Amazons) and she carries the cross-banded orb; New Rome, the city of Constantine, carries a torch and a cornucopia of produce. Constantinople is further identified by a mural crown or *modius*, which probably represents the walls of the city of Constantine, inaugurated in 330.²² In the calendar of 354, Old Rome and New Rome are both associated with sacks of gold; Constantinople is also crowned with a wreath by two putti; and the putti holding candlesticks, who accompany Alexandria, perhaps indicate 'the celebrations traditionally held in honor of these

²⁰ Kathleen J. Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure* (London, 1981), 69, 86–7, and pls. 35–7; Gudrun Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma: Stadtpersonifikationen der Spätantike* (Zurich, 1995), 107–42, with a fascinating reconstruction of the way these figurines may have been used on a consular *sella* (processional chair).

²¹ Anthony Cutler, "‘Rome’ and ‘Constantinople’", in Irmgard Hutter (ed.), *Byzanz und der Westen* (Vienna, 1984), sets out the theory that these are Carolingian copies of late antique originals, modified to represent Francia and Germania. See also Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma*, 185–7.

²² For example in the Calendar of 354, produced in that year in Old Rome: see Michele Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1990), fig. 4, and p. 27; Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma*, 80–106.

city *Tyches* as benefactors of the cities themselves and of the empire as a whole'.²³

Whether these figures were always understood as representing a specifically imperial quality is not clear. Personifications of Rome and Constantinople are attested on the coinage of Constantius II in 343, a sign that they were recognized as the most important capital cities.²⁴ By the sixth century during the reign of Justin II one representation of Constantinople was said to be of Aphrodite, thus suggesting an older, pagan model.²⁵ This confusion between great cities in feminine form and ancient goddesses was sustained for many centuries through different media, for example ninth- and tenth-century Psalter illustration, where not only cities, but also rivers and geographical features, regularly adopt a female personified form. They jostle together with allegorical depictions of the Muses or virtues, traditionally shown as ancient goddesses, scantily clad in togas with bare arms, shoulders and ankles.²⁶ While they occur in illuminations of the Psalms and thus represent Old Testament figures of the dim and distant past, they also embody Christian virtues, which all are enjoined to imitate. If Melodia (Song) inspires David in composition, Sophia (Wisdom) is at his other shoulder to supply the ideas of perseverance, courage and faith in God.

During the late antique period, that is prior to the sixth century when pagan cults were finally outlawed, women had regularly represented power and legitimacy as well as embodying important virtues. Artists always depicted those with imperial responsibilities in their regalia; for personified elements and the Muses they usually employed an ancient style of clothing which revealed their naked arms, shoulders, legs and feet, in ways considered indecent by later Christian authors. So when they were asked to paint female martyrs and Christian saints, artists normally showed them in very modest attire which completely covers their hair and their limbs, adopting the form of dress appropriate to humble Byzantine women. This was characterized by long robes and head coverings that entirely obscured the body and hid the hair. Only in exceptional cases, such as that of St Mary of Egypt who

²³ Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. Kathleen J. Shelton, 'Imperial Tyches', *Gesta*, xviii (1979); Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma*, *passim*, esp. 3–34.

²⁵ Cutler, 'Rome and Constantinople', 61 n. 79.

²⁶ Anthony Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium* (Paris, 1984).

survived in the desert with no clothing at all, is there any concession to the naked features of the feminine form, a hallmark of pagan sculptures.

A feminine element in the decoration of the cities of the East Mediterranean therefore took many forms. Statues of pagan goddesses, the Muses and personifications of virtue preserved in their dress, or lack of it, the ancient Greek ideas of beauty. In contrast, secular portraits and three-dimensional sculptures of Christian women were marked out by clothing which covered them from head to toe, either in their imperial attire, as empresses, or in the simple garments of Christian martyrs and saints. Although they were certainly outnumbered by representations of men, these female types of public statuary functioned in a similar fashion — to draw attention to the achievements of past heroes (often legendary) and famous leaders. In addition, they were considered an adornment of any city and an essential element in the collective memory of its past.

FROM ROMAN TO CHRISTIAN BYZANTIUM B) THE CULT OF THE VIRGIN

Into this method of differentiating female figures, the Virgin Mary fitted without difficulty. As the mother of Jesus, Mary represented an unattainable level of Christian virtue but was also documented, however briefly, in the Gospel stories as a genuine female person. Since her origins and early life receive hardly any attention there, apocryphal texts attempted to fill the tantalizing gap. The Protevangelion of James reconstructed in greater detail the key stages of her life, which formed the basis for her feasts: her semi-miraculous conception and birth; the outstanding qualities which set her apart from childhood on; her protected life in the Temple, where she was selected to weave the purple and red threads used only for the veil; and her obedience even when betrothed to the elderly Joseph. Guided by these amplifications, artists emphasized the humble origins of this extraordinary woman, chosen to become the Mother of God, *Meter Theou*.

Her cult did not go back to the moment of the foundation of Constantine's new capital, but developed rapidly during the early fifth-century debate over her precise role in the Incarnation. After the Council of Ephesus in 431, which decreed that Mary should be called by the title, *Theotokos* (literally, the one who

bore God), her elevated status was stressed in new visual forms.²⁷ A major impetus to her iconography may perhaps be traced to the alleged discovery by Empress Eudokia in Jerusalem of a portrait of the Virgin and Christ Child, said to have been painted by St Luke, no less.²⁸ While this story is probably a later invention, the idea of a painting from life dating from the first century AD may have stimulated group representations of the Holy Mother and Child. Later tradition connects the arrival of Eudokia's icon in Constantinople with the foundation of the Hodegetria church by Empress Pulcheria, who was to all intents and purposes running the imperial court in the early fifth century. Her own identification with the role of Mary in giving birth to God, through special pre-Christmas vigils, built on and in turn encouraged a lay enthusiasm for the Advent feast.²⁹ And her participation in the weekly evening vigils, processions and liturgies associated with the Hodegetria church drew on civic ceremonial as well as novel sermons by Patriarch Proclus on the power of the Virgin, which stressed her significance as Mother of God.³⁰

The empress's patronage of monuments dedicated to the Ever-Virgin (*aeiparthenos*) *Theotokos* undoubtedly played a major part in establishing the new cult in the capital. In this respect it corresponded to a religious context which permitted empresses to respond to theological developments, to establish new shrines for saintly relics, exemplified by the movements of the bones of St Stephen for which Pulcheria founded one of her first churches in the capital. This established a pattern of imperial patronage specific to ruling women, which is often linked to their monastic foundations. Religious communities provided a loyal support and refuge for empresses, who frequently retired to them when widowed.

²⁷ Ioli Kalavresou, 'Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became the Meter Theou', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xlv (1990); Richard Lukas Freytag, *Die autonome Theotokosdarstellung der frühen Jahrhunderte*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1985); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994), 30–41, 47–65.

²⁸ Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds* (London, 1997), 44–8, and pls. 6, 10.

²⁹ Cooper, 'Contesting the Nativity', esp. 42, stressing the imperial impetus behind the formulation of the Virgin's cult, which may underlie Pulcheria's quarrel with Nestorios; cf. Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London, 1994), 53–61, 85–92; Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 141–74.

³⁰ Nicholas P. Constas, 'Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos and the Loom of the Flesh', *Jl Early Christian Studies*, iii (1995).

During the fifth century the cult of Mary attained immense importance in Constantinople, where she gradually took over the role of *Tyche* (Fortuna) and became the city's major protector.³¹ Empress Pulcheria accelerated this replacement of the ancient patron of the capital which formed part of the process of Christianization, promoting the cult of the Virgin and the development of her feasts. She also seems to have initiated building at the sites of the Chalkoprateia and Blachernai churches, which a generation later received the most important Marian relics: her veil, the *omophorion* or *maphorion*, also called *pallium*; and girdle, *zone* (also identified in certain sources as a robe, *esthes*, or shroud, *entaphia spargana*, *peristolia*).³² The discovery of these few witnesses to her earthly life and their transfer to the capital of the empire spurred a further stage in the growth of the cult. Leo I and his wife Verina established a magnificent shrine in the church at Blachernai for the precious veil, deposited in a gold and jewel encrusted reliquary, *soros*, above which the imperial couple installed an icon of themselves flanking the enthroned Virgin. Another icon of the two officials who had discovered the veil and brought it to Constantinople was set up in the church.³³ Images and relics such as these were to play a large part in establishing Mary as the spiritual guardian of the city. There is no surviving artistic record of this celebrated shrine, which burned down in the early eleventh century. It is possible, however, that a sixth-century icon from Sinai may encapsulate the form employed, in which the Virgin is seated on a simple throne, with the Christ Child on her lap, flanked by two military saints with two angels overhead, the whole ensemble framed by a background of architectural features, also found on icons of the same date.³⁴ If so, the lost Blachernai icon would have represented a woman with tremendous influence.

³¹ Erwin Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968), 100–4.

³² Christine Angelidi, *Pulcheria: la castità al potere* (Milan, 1996), esp. 73–86, 120–7; Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 57–9; Cooper, 'Contesting the Nativity'. There are many difficulties in defining the nature of the alleged garment, quaintly called the 'cincture'.

³³ Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 34–5; and on Verina's significance in Byzantine memory, see James, 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?', 133–5.

³⁴ Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons*, i (Princeton, 1976), 18–21, pls. IV–VI; cf. Leslie Brubaker, 'Icons before Iconoclasm?', in *Morphologie sociale e culturali in Europe fra tarda antichità et alto medioevo* (Settimane di Studio di Spoleto, xlv, 1998).

There is a curious corollary to the imperial impetus to the fifth-century cult of the Virgin, which brings into even closer association the activities of empresses and the growing power of the *Theotokos*. It can be seen by comparing the visual representations of the Virgin in West and East. Once the enhanced status of the Virgin became established in Rome, the first church dedicated to her cult was constructed by Pope Sixtus III in the period 432–40. At Santa Maria Maggiore, the Virgin was probably shown enthroned in resplendent mosaic in the apse, now destroyed. Similar representations on the triumphal arch reveal an imperial and imperious figure, a ruler, albeit of the kingdom of Heaven.³⁵ The same emphasis is evident in a number of very damaged frescos, and finds its ultimate expression in the painted icon at Trastevere, which reveals fully imperial associations. This Mary is undoubtedly an empress, wearing the crown with pearl hangings, a heavily bejewelled imperial costume in brilliant colours associated with purple-dyed silk, embroidered in gold and silver thread.³⁶

The context in which such western images of Mary, the Queen of Heaven, were forged suggests that in some way she replaced the empresses of the Roman Empire in the West, who disappeared during the fifth century. Some had been commemorated on coins, for example Galla Placidia, who was buried in her mausoleum at Ravenna in 450.³⁷ By 476, however, Romulus Augustulus was deposed and empresses became a thing of the past. In the absence of real empresses wearing their traditional costume, an overtly imperial representation of the Virgin was adopted, as if to compensate for the lack of an imperial family resident in the West. Through images of *Maria Regina* western Christendom claimed

³⁵ Carlo Cecchelli, *I Mosaici della Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore* (Turin, 1956), 203–19, and pls. 29, 49, xlix; Mary Stroll, 'Maria Regina: Papal Symbol', in Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship*; Ursula Nilgen, 'Maria Regina — ein politischer Kultbildtypus?', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, xix (1981), esp. 6–7, 16–20.

³⁶ The palimpsest wall at S. Maria Antiqua presents the Virgin in a totally imperial guise, as does the icon at Trastevere: Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 1980), 94–103; John Osborne, 'Early Medieval Painting in San Clemente, Rome: The Madonna and Child in the Niche', *Gesta*, xx (1981); Nilgen, 'Maria Regina — ein politischer Kultbildtypus?', 5–8; Stroll, 'Maria Regina: Papal Symbol', 176, and pl. 15. On the 'revolutionary' character of the apse mosaic of Christ crowning the Virgin in S. Maria in Trastevere put up for Pope Innocent II in 1140–80, see *ibid.*, 180–3, and pl. 19, a development which culminates in the *Maria Regina* mosaic in the apse of S. Maria Maggiore of 1295, *ibid.*, 187–8, and pl. 26.

³⁷ John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London, 1997), 106–11, pls. 60, 62, 63.

its own share of the inheritance of past glory and transposed it to the heavenly realm. This tradition, developed in Rome, provided a model not only for much later artists but also for those responsible for the striking sixth-century mosaics at Durazzo.³⁸

In contrast, in the East, empresses like Pulcheria already monopolized all the symbolic trappings of imperial power. A clear example is provided by ivory plaques which depict a female eastern ruler, probably the empress Ariadne.³⁹ Here she wears the crown with pendant pearls, carries the orb and sceptre, wears the imperial *loros*, in this case with a victorious emperor depicted on the panel (*tablion*) that flaps across the chest. This ruling woman is in every way identified as an empress. The imperial feminine in the East meant that actual human empresses had cornered the use of full imperial regalia. Mary, therefore, had to be shown differently, hence the typical presentation of the Virgin in the simple attire of her Byzantine images: a dark blue or red gown, occasionally edged with gold thread; a paler blue, purple or brown head covering, *maphorion*, and no jewellery of any sort. From the earliest surviving monuments that record her presence, the Virgin wears this deeply unregal costume.⁴⁰ The only sartorial expression of her superior associations are the red slippers, an echo of footwear reserved to emperors. Hans Belting has drawn attention to the western image of the Virgin shown with the insignia of imperial power 'which she never was at Byzantium' but does not provide an explanation.⁴¹ A recent study by Henry Maguire, however, confirms that it was the hold maintained by the women of the imperial court on their exclusive right to wear Byzantine regalia which made impossible an eastern version of the *Maria Regina* image. The first time Christ and the Virgin appear in imperial costume occurs only outside the empire in

³⁸ On the Durazzo mosaics, see Maria Andaloro, 'I Mosaici parietali di Durazzo o dell'origine Costantinopolitana del tema iconografico di Maria Regina', in Otto Feld and Urs Peschlow (eds.), *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann gewidmet*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1986), iii, esp. pl. 36. As will be evident, I do not agree that the *Maria Regina* image originated in the East. I am most grateful to Alexei Lidov for discussion of the *Maria Regina* images. See also the Anglo-Saxon evidence cited in Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith* (Oxford, 1997), esp. 172–4.

³⁹ See James, 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?', 125, 130–1, and pl. 7.

⁴⁰ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 126–32; Hans Belting, 'Papal Artistic Commissions as Definitions of the Medieval Church in Rome', in Hellmut Hager and Susan Scott Munshower (eds.), *Light on the Eternal City* (University Park, Pa, 1987).

⁴¹ Belting, 'Papal Artistic Commissions', 13–14.

Kastoria and on the eve of the Ottoman conquest in 1384–5. The church of St Athanasios patronized by a local Albanian family, the Musachi, depicts the heavenly court in Byzantine imperial dress. In effect, eastern images of the Virgin as empress do not appear until the last earthly empresses had disappeared.⁴²

It is in the humble, typically Byzantine guise that the figure of the Mother of God becomes familiar throughout the Christian world, and is commemorated in such notable churches in Byzantium (apse mosaics of St Sophia in Constantinople and Thessaloniki), up the Adriatic coast to Torcello and Venice, north of the Black Sea to Kiev. She is an imperial figure by virtue of her hieratic pose, dominating the viewer as she presents her son, the Son of God, to the human world. But she could not be depicted as an empress, because females of the imperial family were already shown in this way. And not only living empresses: Constantine I's mother Helena was also shown in full regalia, for instance in the Psalters, as well as all subsequent sainted empresses, for example Theophano and Eudokia, the first and third wives of Leo VI.⁴³ Of course, imperial costume was always severely restricted. The only holy figures permitted to wear it are the Archangels, and they are sexless winged beings that can never be mistaken for emperors.⁴⁴

Her costume did not prevent the Virgin from assuming an active role as a divine protector of the ruling city of Constantinople, and she was believed to have physically combated the Avaro-Slavonic invaders of 626 by fighting on the walls beside the citizen militia.⁴⁵ By the early tenth century it was possible to show her as the patron to whom Constantine I had dedicated his

⁴² Henry Maguire, 'The Heavenly Court', in Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, D.C., 1997), esp. 257–8.

⁴³ See the analysis by Leslie Brubaker of imperial women represented in Paris gr. 510, 'Politics, Patronage and Art in Ninth Century Byzantium: The *Homilies* of Gregory of Nazianzus in Paris (B.N. gr. 510)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xxxix (1985); and the late ninth-century marble inlay portrait probably of Leo VI's third wife, discussed by Sharon Gerstel, 'Saint Eudokia and the Imperial Household of Leo VI', *Art Bull.*, lxxix (1997).

⁴⁴ See for example the fresco from Cappadocia, illustrated in Anthony Cutler and Jean-Michel Spieser, *Byzance médiévale, 700–1204* (Paris, 1996), 109, pl. 80; Glenn Peers, 'Patriarchal Politics in the Paris Gregory (B.N. gr. 510)', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, xlvii (1997), also draws attention to the different people who may wear the imperial *loros*, with many fascinating observations; cf. Maguire, 'Heavenly Court', 255–7.

⁴⁵ Averil Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople', *Jl Theol. Studies*, new ser., xxix (1978); Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, ch. 6, and conclusion.

new city and Justinian had presented his main church, although of course it is dedicated to Holy Wisdom. For this is how she appears in the mosaic of the south-west vestibule of the church, seated on a throne receiving her city from its imperial founder and her church from its builder. By this date, her capacity to defend the city had been tested on numerous occasions, as documented in the sermons of Photios, who also devoted a particularly important one to her image in the apse, which was unveiled on Sunday, 29 March 867.⁴⁶ At a time when her cult was growing ever stronger, as a result of the restoration of icons, there was no question of developing the iconography of her powers in an earthly, imperial direction. The established tradition of simple dark blue robe sufficed to delineate the supreme power of the chief defender of the ruling city.

From this contrast between images of the Virgin in East and West, it is evident that traditional representations of ruling women in their imperial regalia reserve to the Byzantine empress what the West bestowed on its substitute, the heavenly empress. Thus differences in church-state relations may be encoded in the contrasting images of the Virgin. Her modest dress in Byzantium is a consequence of the eastern empire's continuity and its preoccupation with the secular aspects of power, the glistening insignia of imperial office, with its extravagant insistence on the use of gold and gems. When western artists wished to celebrate her as Queen of Heaven, they drew on the developed *Maria Regina* type preserved on Roman icons, complete with imperial costume. Although the image of Christ crowning Mary as Queen of Heaven dates from the twelfth century, it has direct links back to these precedents. Conversely, there was no fixed iconography of the wives of western rulers, even those of the Holy Roman emperors of the West.

Since the religious sphere provided women with limited opportunities for self-expression, it is not surprising that the cult of the Virgin constitutes perhaps the most striking example of the role of the imperial feminine in shaping Byzantine culture. In particular, Pulcheria's devotion to the Ever-Virgin Mother of God reflected both her own dedication to chastity as well as her

⁴⁶ *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, trans. Cyril Mango (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 286–96, esp. 290; Robin Cormack, 'The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed', in André Guillou and Jannic Durand (eds.), *Byzance et les images* (Paris, 1994), esp. 237–9.

concentrated patronage of this relative newcomer to the ranks of the saints. Through the innovation of night vigils, processions and liturgies connected with her relics, Pulcheria helped to establish her cycle of feast days: from her Birth and Presentation in the Temple to the Annunciation, and so on to her Assumption.⁴⁷ In addition, all this activity built up a close association between the heavenly powers of the *Aeiparthenos* and purely earthly powers attributed to human empresses. The two spheres are mutually reinforced by Corippus on the occasion of Justin II's coronation in 565. In the prayer attributed to the Empress Sophia, a clear analogy is made between the Virgin's imperial attributes and those powers Sophia now assumes as empress.⁴⁸

While emperors, patriarchs, monks and ordinary men were also dedicated to the service of the Virgin, her presence in the city, her relics and their miraculous powers, seem to have special influence in the lives of Byzantine women. The example of the mother of St Stephen the Younger is surely not an isolated case.⁴⁹ It purports to document the devotion of one anonymous woman to the Blachernai shrine, where she participated in the special liturgy every Friday. In her private prayers she begged the Virgin to grant her a son (she already had daughters), and promised to dedicate him to her service. This association of the Virgin with miraculous cures of sterility or infertility among women seems to have been widespread. It draws attention to yet another strand in the development of the imperial feminine, the duty of empresses to produce legitimate sons who could inherit their father's power.

FROM ANCIENT TO MEDIEVAL BYZANTIUM: THE DEVELOPMENT OF DYNASTY

In Byzantium the growth of this dynastic thrust is evident from the time of Constantine I onwards, but it becomes more

⁴⁷ Joseph Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie de Byzance* (Paris, 1976), 241–52; Antoine Wenger, *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VI^e au X^e siècle* (Paris, 1955); Cooper, 'Contesting the Nativity'.

⁴⁸ Cameron, 'Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople', 82–5; Andaloro, 'I Mosaici parietali di Durazzo', 109–12, where the *Maria Regina* image at Durazzo is traced to this and other eastern texts rather than the western examples cited above. While this argument has great force, it remains the case that no representations of the Virgin as empress survive from Byzantium.

⁴⁹ *La Vie d'Etienne le Jeune par Etienne le Diacre*, ed. and trans. Marie-France Auzépy (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, iii, Aldershot, 1997), 92–3; Judith Herrin, 'The Domestic and Private Context of Icon Veneration in Byzantium', in Anneke Mulder-Bakker and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (eds.), *Household, Family and Christian Tradition* (forthcoming).

pronounced during the fifth century and dominant by the seventh. Initially it is more concerned with the problem of imperial succession when a ruler dies without an heir. On such occasions the female relatives of the deceased may be expected to play a vital role in the transmission of imperial power. The tradition had been developed in Rome and was employed throughout the Roman world. Thus Pulcheria, whose commitment to everlasting virginity characterized her adult life, agreed to a fictive marriage to an elderly general Marcian, on the death of Theodosius II.⁵⁰ And later in the fifth century Ariadne, who may be the female ruler commemorated in ivory panels, was required by the senate of Constantinople to choose a husband to whom she could transmit the imperial name.⁵¹ As the daughter of one emperor and widow of another, it was recognized that Ariadne had imperial blood in her veins as no one else did. She was already elderly and might be past childbearing age, but nonetheless her imperial credentials were so strong that whomever she selected to become her husband would accede to imperial authority through her. So the senate deferred to her choice, and her portrait, together with that of Anastasios, adorns the surviving consular diptychs of his reign, a tribute to her prior claim on imperial power.⁵²

Christian marriage further enhanced the development of a dynastic preoccupation in Byzantium. Emperors were united with their wives according to the Christian idea of marriage as a lifelong commitment; divorce in elite circles gradually became much less common. And the Christian iconography of marriage supplied one very significant element in the dynastic emphasis of Byzantine ruling families: the image of Christ blessing the couple which is found on late antique coins as well as many rings and wedding belts. As this image was transferred to the imperial couple, and their marriages were commemorated on coins, it extended its meaning beyond the mutual duties of the persons joined in marriage to the shared responsibilities of the couple ruling over the Christian empire.⁵³ Surviving examples of such depictions

⁵⁰ Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses*, 208–9.

⁵¹ *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. J. J. Reiske, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1829–30), i, ch. 92 (417–25).

⁵² See above, James, 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?', 131, and pl. 8.

⁵³ Gary Vikan, 'Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xliv (1990); Leslie Brubaker, 'Courtly Projections: Coin Portraits of Byzantine Emperresses from the Fourth to the Twelfth Century' (paper given at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, July 1998).

indicate that in Byzantium the female partner of the ruler shared in the supreme authority invested in his office. In many of them Christ is shown as the ultimate source of this power. Standing between the imperial couple, he endows male and female alike, blessing their association and implying that both shared his approval. The emperor and empress were subsequently commemorated in numerous family images together with their children, the longed-for and anticipated consequence of their marriage. From written sources it is known that many adorned the Great Palace; others were erected on public monuments such as the Milion, which no longer survive. Similar images appear in manuscripts. It is clear that this type of record of imperial power continued throughout the empire's existence.

Many of these have perished. But a late example survives in the south-east gallery of St Sophia in Constantinople, where there are two particularly important imperial group portraits: one dating from the mid-eleventh century which commemorates Empress Zoe with her third husband, Constantine IX Monomachos; and one from the twelfth representing John II Komnenos and his wife Irene.⁵⁴ In both, the imperial couple flank the figure of Christ or the Virgin to whom they present gifts (a sack of gold, an imperial donation recorded in a written scroll). John and Irene are accompanied by their son Alexios. These mosaics are among the few that survive from a much larger number, for which there are only written descriptions. On such images the empress fulfils her primary role as wife of the emperor. For her primary role is to bear him legitimate heirs who will inherit the empire and maintain the dynasty. In this respect Irene performed admirably; she bore the emperor four daughters and four sons, of whom the youngest, Manuel, succeeded his father in 1143 and ruled for more than thirty years. Successful imperial families are often depicted at the beginning of manuscripts commissioned by the emperor: for instance, the portrait of Eudokia, wife of Basil I, and her two sons, Leo and Alexander, who both became emperor.⁵⁵

These images illustrate perfectly the 'normal' dynastic role of empress as consort. According to this definition, the feminine

⁵⁴ Cormack, 'Emperor at St. Sophia', 240–3; image from S. Sophia, cf. Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pl. 212.

⁵⁵ Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1999), 5–7, 162–3, and fig. 29.

counterpart of the emperor should perform a supportive role, accompanying the ruler on social engagements, at religious festivals and important court events, diplomatic receptions, anniversaries, and so on. The role can be undertaken by other female relatives: a wife is preferable, but there must be a woman at the apex of Byzantine courtly society. In 613 after his first wife's death Herakleios crowned his one-year-old daughter *augusta*, as if the court could not function without a nominal empress.⁵⁶ A similar situation occurred under Leo VI, who remarked when he crowned his daughter as empress: 'Not having an empress it was impossible to celebrate the banquets according to the prescribed tradition and custom'.⁵⁷ In the great ceremonial events the roles of the imperial couple are clearly gendered and complementary, and, however subordinate, the female part became essential to the expression of the male imperial role. Their joint rule is symbolized by the couple's imperial robes of office, their crowns and regalia, the official costume which identifies them as rulers.⁵⁸ The empress has a vital role to perform which may permit her to overstep the 'constitutional' limits of her given power.

The crown jewels of most modern monarchies have their origin in Byzantium and always include official uniforms, complete with sashes, medals and other marks of distinction, plus hats (crowns), shoes, swords, staffs or other emblems of office for both male and female partners. In countries where male primogeniture has given way to the rights of the first-born regardless of sex, women are regularly called upon to wear these heavy costumes at their coronations. Similarly, in Byzantium wives of emperors were required to pose for official portraits in their regalia, and it is in this official pose that they are nearly always depicted. Coins, of course, are frequently the most formal record of imperial status, so when women assume imperial power this is the first and

⁵⁶ *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1822), 702; *Chronicon Paschale*, 284–628 A.D., trans. Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby (Liverpool, 1989), 154; Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: études sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantin* (Paris, 1996), 49.

⁵⁷ Werner Ohnsorge, 'Drei deperdita der byzantinischen Kaiserkanzlei und die Frankenadressen im Zeremonialbuch des Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xlv (1952), esp. 325–6. At least Leo's daughter was a grown woman, rather than a child, but there is a contradictory element in the symbolic value attached to an *augusta*.

⁵⁸ For an opposing view, see Ioli Kalavresou-Maxeiner, 'Eudokia Makrembolitissa and the Romanos Ivory', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xxxi (1977), esp. 315–19.

sometimes only medium on which their images survive.⁵⁹ The depiction of the imperial couple in their extravagant gold, bejewelled costumes is however one of the trademarks of Byzantine ideology and it includes a feminine component in the partnership.

In the development of a stronger dynastic concern, the empress may not receive the actual *title* of empress at her marriage to the emperor. Her coronation as *augusta* may be delayed until she gives birth to a son, or for a variety of other reasons. Constantine V crowned his third wife Eudokia, who was the mother of his five sons, about fifteen years after their marriage. Nonetheless, this draws attention to the fundamental function of the emperor's wife, which is fecundity. Unless the empress gives birth to children, preferably male, she fails in her duty.

These two aspects of the empress's duty constitute what I would call the minimal definition of the imperial feminine. First, the empress has an important role as the hostess of the court. She receives the wives of senators when they attend the emperor and she leads a feminine counterpoint to the male ceremonial. Second, she is expected to produce the emperor's successor and as the mother of the heir may have an opportunity to influence the next ruler.⁶⁰

IMPERIAL SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSTANTINOPLE

There are, however, broader, more significant aspects to the imperial feminine, which develop in the context of the third strand of resources — the overall environment and topography of Constantinople. Despite the straitjacket of the model of Old Rome, which laid down the basic plan, the new capital presented an opportunity for a certain novelty and within it a feminine space was created. In the court of Constantinople established in the Great Palace, the empress had relative independence in her own quarters; there she controlled her own staff and treasury. She also had at her disposal the assistance of a whole range of eunuchs, who held official positions reserved to the men without

⁵⁹ Brubaker, 'Courtly Projections'; imperial marriages are no longer commemorated on coins of the seventh and eighth century, but Martina briefly appears on the coinage of Herakleios: see A. R. Bellinger and Philip Grierson, *Catalogue of Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, 5 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1966–99), ii, 69.

⁶⁰ Indeed, the education and training of the next ruler is of crucial importance and must constitute the most important duty of any empress: see Judith Herrin, 'L'Éducation maternelle à Byzance', in Stéphane Lebecq et al. (eds.), *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident VI^e–XI^e siècles* (Lille, 1999).

beards. The geographical privilege was made possible by the enhanced range of sexuality, with the eunuch *corps de chambre* guarding and policing the female quarters of the palace. With her own means of patronage the empress could fund the building of new shrines and set up her own monasteries as secure retreats to which she could withdraw once her active political role came to an end. Finally, the field of imperial ideology and ceremonial gave an empress the opportunity to influence foreign policy, as well as introducing new activities. Diplomacy required particular forms of reception and alliances were often sealed by marriages, in which empresses necessarily played an important part if their children were involved.

In the development of a discontinuous pattern, the weakness of the rules governing the behaviour of empresses is a key factor.⁶¹ Of course, certain activities were prescribed. Empresses were expected to participate in all the court ceremonies, a full liturgical year of receptions and visits to churches, monasteries and shrines outside the palace. They were required to supervise most activities within the female quarters of the palace, especially those involving the education of their young children. But sometimes an empress might do something quite unprecedented, as happened in 718 to Maria, the wife of Leo III. After her coronation as *augusta*, in recognition of her success in the fertility stakes, their young son Constantine was to be baptized by the patriarch in the church of St Sophia. 'She solemnly processed alone to the Great Church, without her husband. After praying in front of the sanctuary doors, she went over to the Great Baptistry, which her husband had entered earlier with a few members of his household.' After Patriarch Germanos had baptized the child, she 'returned in procession with her baptized son and distributed largess on her way from the church to the Bronze Gate of the palace'.⁶² Whether she was forced to perform this act alone by Leo's refusal to accompany her is not clear. But she apparently made a perfectly good ceremony out of it. At least it is recorded that what she did was not seen as something unacceptable.

⁶¹ On the 'constitutional' position of the empress, see St. Mashev, 'Die staatsrechtliche Stellung der byzantinischen Kaiserinnen', *Byzantinoslavica*, xxvii (1966); Elisabeth Bensammar, 'La Titulature de l'impératrice et sa signification', *Byzantion*, xlvii (1976).

⁶² *The Chronographia of Theophanes*, A.M. 6211, ed. C. De Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883), i, 400; *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), 551–3; *De ceremoniis*, ii, ch. 22 (619–20).

Even when excluded from the formal circles of political power, certain empresses continued to play a significant role in the life of the empire. Enforced retirement to a nunnery, which is so often considered a form of banishment and indeed plunged many empresses into an undocumented, final phase of their lives, might yet provide ex-empresses with a context from which to plot.⁶³ Communities of dedicated women occasionally encouraged such activities, which represent a definite attempt to influence the political and religious life of the empire. And finally, even in death, empresses might yet establish a venue from which other females of the ruling family could gain inspiration. Visiting the tombs of the deceased was a procedure sanctioned by the church and often stipulated by wills, which obliged descendants to provide food and hospitality for a certain number of poor folk on the anniversaries of their relatives' deaths.⁶⁴ In the fulfilment of these activities younger members of the dynasty might find ways of stepping outside the boundaries of what empresses 'normally' did.

Devotion to the cult of the Virgin might also permit the empress to undertake private visits to her shrines beyond the palace. A graphic illustration comes from the collection of mythical stories about the capital city of the empire, which record and try to explain an amusing tale concerning the so-called monastery of Haste (*spoude*). In a brief account, the hurried incident which gave rise to this name and occurred in the reign of Leo III (717–41) is described as follows: 'The lady Anna, wife of Leo born in Syria, coming from [a visit to] Blachernai when she was pregnant and at the time when she should deliver herself, going down to the house of a certain *protospatharios* she gave birth [there]. And she purchased the house and called it the monastery of haste, because the imminent birth hurried her there before she could get back to the palace'.⁶⁵ *Spoude*, however, can mean zeal

⁶³ Again Pulcheria spent some time in her private palace in Hebdomon, away from court life, until she could find a way of removing the chief eunuch Chrysaphios: see Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 191–9.

⁶⁴ A later example is provided by the Typikon of the Virgin Kecharitomenē drawn up by Irene, wife of John II Komnenos: see Paul Gautier, 'Le Typikon de la Théotokos Kékaritōménē', *Revue des études byzantines*, xliii (1985), esp. 109 (on the feast of the *koimesis*) and 121 (on the commemoration of the founders' death days).

⁶⁵ *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, ed. Theodor Preger (Leipzig, 1901–7), fasc. 2, Patria Konstantinoupoleos III, para. 107, p. 251.

as well as haste and the compiler has selected the meaning to fit his account.⁶⁶

As is to be expected with such stories, its details are incorrect: indeed they may have been concocted to explain an otherwise odd name attached to a particular monastery. Whether or not the text can be read as a record of fact (the incident may never have occurred), the compilers of the *Patria* believed that such a journey was possible and that imperial women might make it. The same source preserves another tale of the ninth-century Empress Theodora making the same journey, also in conditions of pregnancy, albeit not so advanced. The area along the route from the Great Palace to Blachernai was also known for its spacious palaces. Theodora's daughter Thekla was associated with the area when she retired to one of these villas.⁶⁷ Of course, the whole court regularly visited the celebrated shrine of Blachernai, where since the time of Leo I there were facilities for them to rest (the so-called *triklinia*).⁶⁸ But as the *Patria* texts are full of legendary features, it is not at all surprising that in the case of the *mone tes spoudes* it has attributed a story about the wife of Leo III (Maria) to his daughter who was called Anna. However inaccurate, what this tale implies is that, on occasion, empresses might decide to visit Blachernai, probably because of its very important church and relic, the girdle of the Virgin, which had been placed in a valuable reliquary there by Leo I and Verina, as noted above.⁶⁹ From other sources it is known that this relic was considered particularly efficacious for women in childbirth, a sort of holy epidural.⁷⁰ So in her heavily pregnant state, the empress might

⁶⁶ Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: études sur le recueil des 'Patria'* (Paris, 1984), 317; Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinopoleos*, 524–5. In these 'patriographic' texts much effort is expended on etymological explanations for the names of particular monuments. Mostly they are quite unconvincing and reflect the authors' low level of knowledge both about the city's history and the derivation of Greek names.

⁶⁷ *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, ed. Preger, fasc. 2, *Patria Konstantinoupoleos III*, para. 41, pp. 232–3; also confirmed by Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronicle*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 174; Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 316–17; Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinoupoleos*, 538. On Thekla's retirement, see Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronicle*, ed. Bekker, 147–8.

⁶⁸ *De ceremoniis*, i, ch. 27 (148 ff.); I am grateful to Georgia Maleviti for drawing my attention to this reference.

⁶⁹ See above, p. 14, n. 33.

⁷⁰ See *Zwei griechische Texte über die Vita der heiligen Theophano*, ed. Eduard Kurtz (St Petersburg, 1898), 2. 28–34, where in a difficult labour a mother borrows the relic.

well have wished to invoke its powers (or even to borrow it for her own imminent delivery?). But 'Anna' had miscalculated her dates and the onset of her labour forced her to give birth in a private house.

If it was possible for an empress in such a state to undertake the fairly arduous three-mile journey from the Great Palace to Blachernai, which lay just within the city walls, this in itself is interesting and reflects a long-standing devotion to the Virgin's great powers. The assumption of the obviously mythic story is that empresses did this sort of thing, and might find themselves in distant parts of the city when labour pains began. And if any member of the imperial family had ever been caught out in this way, the event might have persuaded the emperor to find a method of preventing its repetition. This brings us to another unnoticed historical coincidence: Leo III was the grandfather of the first imperial prince 'born in the purple', *porphyrogenetos*.

The famous epithet derives from the purple chamber in which empresses were delivered of their children from the mid-eighth century onwards. The first imperial child to be so identified is Leo, born in 750 to Irene the Chazar, the first wife of Constantine V.⁷¹ The existence of the institution should also to be linked to the dynastic concerns of the Syrian family of Leo III, who took such pains to establish his family as one that would rule for many years.⁷² So what more natural than that Leo III and his son Constantine V should have established a special chamber, suitably lined with porphyry or hung with purple cloth, in which the empress would from now on give birth? No more accidents and imperial deliveries in the private homes of anonymous *protospatharioi*. Rather, a special room which could be adapted as a maternity ward, in which only the legitimate wife of the reigning emperor would retire to perform the labour of giving birth to the next heir to the throne. The empress's primary task was thus brought under even tighter imperial control.

However fanciful, the story of the monastery of haste draws attention to the interaction of mundane and heavenly imperial powers. The cult of the *Theotokos* in Constantinople is clearly a

⁷¹ Gilbert Dagron, 'Nés dans le Pourpre', *Travaux et mémoires*, xii (1994). The citation occurs in a Neapolitan document dated 763. Constantine V also built the church of the Pharos: see J. Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople* (Paris, 1910), 104.

⁷² Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre*, 169–95; Judith Herrin, 'The Context of Iconoclast Reform', in Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (Centre for Byzantine

ruling power, *basilissa dynamis*, a superior authority to heal and save. The secular/human and theological/divine aspects of this imperious feminine interconnect. Given the patriarchal assumptions of Byzantine society, male commentators who produce its written sources naturally reserve to men the exercise of all imperial power.⁷³ It is assumed that the power to rule should be restricted to the male sex, because of military responsibilities that require *andreia* (courage) and all the warlike virtues (though eunuchs can also be very good generals). The most recent and stimulating analysis of Byzantine succession has drawn attention to the two normal routes of becoming emperor: succeeding to the office of emperor, in a line that descends from the first kings recorded in the Bible, or succeeding one's father, the previous ruler. Neither route is considered to be open to women.⁷⁴

Yet problems over succession in Byzantium create specific circumstances in which empresses may be called upon to perform a function beyond that of consort and mother. For example, if the heir apparent is still a child, a very young boy who cannot assume the office of emperor. Then imperial women have a clear role, one hallowed by tradition and respected by honourable precedent. Roman law assumes that the mother of a child is the natural person to defend its rights until it reaches the age of maturity. Maternal authority is therefore a constant feature of the education and upbringing of orphaned children. The widowed mother is expected to play a notable role as the one person whose natural instinct is to protect the child's rights, to ensure that in the fullness of time when he gains his majority he will indeed become emperor. A similar stress on the mother defending the

(n. 72 cont.)

Studies, Birmingham, 1977); Dionysia Missiou, 'The Coins of the Period of the Iconomachy as an Expression of Political Ideology', *Coinage and Religion: Ancient World, Byzantine World* (Ovolos, ii, 1997), esp. 181.

⁷³ See the curious analysis based on Duhamel by Dean A. Miller, 'Royauté et ambiguïté sexuelle', *Annales ESC*, xxvi (1971); Dean A. Miller, 'Byzantine Sovereignty and Female Potencies', in L. O. Fredenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (Cosmos, vii, Edinburgh, 1992).

⁷⁴ Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre*, ch. 1, esp. 70. While Zoe and Theodora inherited imperial authority from their father Constantine VIII in 1028, it was only after Zoe had raised four different men to the throne that her sister tried to rule on her own. That they were able to elevate so many to exercise supreme power in Byzantium reflects on their noble birth, but also on the failure of their father and uncle to marry them to suitable husbands at the proper age of around fifteen. See Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025–1204* (London, 1991), 42–58.

best interests of her child is found in all walks of life and through all periods of Byzantine history.⁷⁵

A number of empresses enhance their powers through guardianship over their sons after they suffer widowhood. While male chroniclers may display unease about the situation, they record it as the norm. Imperial mothers of minor sons are thus a constant of Byzantine history. In the mid-seventh century this is how the empress Martina justified her ambitions for her own son, over her stepson. The senate, however, refused to tolerate her claims and supported the position of Constans, grandson of Emperor Herakleios by his first wife. Martina and her son were therefore mutilated and exiled.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, a considerable number of empresses attained greater powers than they otherwise might have done by exercising their legitimate role as guardian, in defence of their sons' rights to rule. This was the scenario that permitted both Irene and Theodora in the eighth and ninth centuries to react energetically against the vested interests of court, church and army to ensure that their sons both eventually became emperor. After that, their behaviour differs. But there is no doubt that as mothers they were expected to protect their children's property, wealth, and expectations of supreme power.

THE FEMALE RULER

Finally, what if the empress declines to choose another consort after the emperor's death? Can she, with sufficient courage, manliness and strength overcome her inherent, because feminine, weakness to take his place? Can she function as an honorary man if this is required? Here an immediate parallel can be drawn with male and female saints. Most sainted females have lesser qualities than their male counterparts, since they have to overcome the inheritance of Eve and the sin of the Garden of Eden in order to manifest true holiness. Many an early Christian saint's *Life* records the manifestation of *andreia*, that quintessentially male quality of courage, which makes it possible for a woman to behave as a man. Some resort to disguise and seek to pass as men or eunuchs

⁷⁵ See Angeliki E. Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XI^e-XIII^e siècles* (Paris 1992), 148; and n. 60 above.

⁷⁶ *Chronographia of Theophanes*, A.M. 6133, ed. De Boor, i, 341; *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. Mango and Scott, 474-5.

rather than reveal their female nature.⁷⁷ In this transformation there are several key stages of ‘masculination’, starting with cutting off their long hair, adopting male dress, acting like a man and eventually being accepted as a eunuch, even to the extent of joining a male monastic community.

Two instances among others were well known in Byzantium, as well as in western Christendom, and marked the possibility of women acting as men. The first comes from the *Vita* of Pelagia/Pelagius, whose story was translated into many tongues and finds a place in the *Golden Legend* of Jacopo da Voragine, the ultimate guarantee of popularity.⁷⁸ The most telling aspect of her life as a eunuch monk, renowned for holiness, who lived alone on the Mount of Olives, occurs after her death. When other monks came to lay out the body, they found the tell-tale evidence of her sex, and the story went around like wildfire that Pelagius was a she. As a result all the nuns from religious communities for miles around insisted on coming to the funeral, a public event, bearing candles and singing the dirges, mourning one of their own.⁷⁹ As Pelagia was laid to rest, her sisters claimed her as a model — a very holy woman who had deceived the whole world in her disguised existence as a penitent monk.

Records of such transvestism do not survive in Byzantium after the sixth century except for a few, arresting instances. Holy women were encouraged to live more normal roles, even as married women and mothers. Yet the attraction of ‘becoming male’ in Christian terms remains. Lives of female saints who succeeded in avoiding arranged marriage by entering male monasteries disguised as eunuchs were much copied in medieval times, not only in Byzantium but also in the Christian West. In the tenth century Ælfric’s Anglo-Saxon translations of saints’ lives included the stories of Eufrosia and Eugenia, both eastern transvestites, who chose to become monks in order to avoid detection

⁷⁷ N. Delierneux, ‘Virilité physique et sainteté féminine dans l’hagiographie orientale du IV^e au VII^e siècle’, *Byzantion*, lxxvii (1997).

⁷⁸ *Pélagie la pénitente: métamorphoses d’une légende*, ed. Pierre Petitmengin, 2 vols. (Paris, 1981–4). Volume 1 includes the Greek, Georgian, Latin, Armenian, Syriac, Arab and Slavonic versions; and volume 2 contains a lengthy analysis of their long survival in western recensions, medieval French, Italian, Portuguese, English, German, Dutch, and a Norwegian saga.

⁷⁹ See the Greek texts edited by Bernard Flusin, *ibid.*, i, 92–3 (paras. 49–51) and introduction, 41–71; Ross Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Women’s Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia, 1988), 316–24, esp. 324.

by their families.⁸⁰ Through the copying, translation, reading and hearing of these stories of women who defied their sex and became men, the notion was perpetuated that women could overcome their feminine characteristics. The idea of them living either as isolated desert 'fathers' or as eunuchs in male religious communities appears to have had widespread appeal.⁸¹ Women who succeeded in setting aside what male authors perceived as a natural tendency to slip, to fall and to sin, were remembered and admired.

The second instance concerns Theodora, the ex-circus entertainer and one of the most maligned of all imperial brides, chosen by Justinian to share his throne. For Theodora, disguise as a man was out of the question since her power stemmed from her feminine qualities and seductive charms, which fascinated male observers. While Prokopios, the sole source for most of our information about her, condemns these powers, on another occasion he presents her as leading the resistance to threatened revolt, putting into her mouth a speech derived from Isokrates, with the glorious message that it is better to die in the imperial purple than to flee in the face of rebellion.⁸² Words later echoed at Tilbury: 'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king'.⁸³

Thanks to skilful analysis, we now understand Prokopios' Janus-like attitude to Theodora much better.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, during the Nika riot in 532, he suggests that Theodora had to apologize for intervening in a male discourse in order to stiffen Justinian's resolve. Some modern commentators have built great theoretical edifices on this passage.⁸⁵ They claim that Theodora is here transgressing the established borders of her position as a woman, even if she is the most elevated of all women in the

⁸⁰ Pauline Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Past and Present*, no. 163 (May 1999), esp. 9–12; Ælfric, *Lives of the Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 2 vols. (Early Eng. Text Soc., old ser., lxxvi, repr. London, 1966), i, 34, and ii, 344, for the stories of Eugenia and Eufrasia, both eastern saints of the early Christian period.

⁸¹ On the apparent ease of disguise as a eunuch, see above, pp. 29–30.

⁸² Prokopios, *History of the Wars*, xxiv, 33–7 (ed. J. Haurly, trans. H. B. Dewing, 5 vols., London, 1914–28, i, 230–2); Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985), 69.

⁸³ Queen Elizabeth I addressing the troops, 1588.

⁸⁴ Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 67–83; Elizabeth Fisher, 'Theodora and Antonina in the *Historia Arcana*: History or Fiction?', *Arethusa*, xi (1978).

⁸⁵ Charles Barber, 'The Imperial Panel at San Vitale: A Reconsideration', *Byzantine and Mod. Greek Studies*, xiv (1990); James, 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?', 132–3, and pl. 9.

empire. She invades the male sphere of public discourse, coming out of the restricted corridors of female space, private, hidden, often limited to women, children and eunuchs. No wonder she has to apologize before speaking in front of the inner circle of imperial advisers, the most trusted members of the 'cabinet' of the sixth century AD.

Of course, we do not know how far the imperial couple shared or disputed power. Prokopios claims that they supported different factions in order to whip up disagreements between their supporters, to raise the tensions which they would later exploit to serve their own imperial purposes.⁸⁶ Justinian seems to have consulted Theodora on other matters, not merely what to do about the riot of 532. And Theodora seems to have had control of considerable space of her own where she acted independently, for she hid a Monophysite patriarch inside her private quarters for years. She also tortured and probably killed several individuals whom she accused of serious crimes, trumped-up charges no doubt, but she was able to impose an arbitrary judgement. Theodora used imperial powers to remove her enemies and to force her rivals into marriages she arranged. But nearly all the evidence concerning this particularly brilliant empress derives from the record of Prokopios, and it is he who attributes to her words of apology as she steps forward to save the day.⁸⁷

In 532 he states that she was present at this critical council of war and implies that she would have attended other 'cabinet' meetings. There is no suggestion that Theodora was an outsider to the circles of supreme power, rather her insider status is confirmed by the success of her advice. The empress had access to this imperial space. Her manliness is acknowledged without any need for disguise. All that we know of this event is in the record of Prokopios. It may well be a fiction, contrived as a warning that even women say it is better to die in the purple than flee, and that there will be no female welcome for treason. What matters here is that Prokopios was a known source, that his account of Theodora was at the very least one of the myths available within Byzantine ruling circles to validate female inter-

⁸⁶ *The Anecdota*, x, 15–23 (trans. H. B. Dewing, London, 1935, 126–8).

⁸⁷ Prokopios, *History of the Wars*, xxiv, 32–7 (ed. Haury, trans. Dewing, i, 230–2): the recommendation not to flee is prefaced by the following words: 'a woman ought not to be daring among men or to assert herself boldly among those who are holding back from fear'. For her insistence on marrying people against their will, see *Anecdota*, xvii, 28–33, 43–5 (trans. Dewing, 206–8, 210).

vention, when this might prove necessary or useful. In addition, statues and portraits of this famous empress decorated the city.⁸⁸ Theodora's story, like that of Pelagia, was handed down — the possibility of women having manly virtue and the will to rule was recorded in what claimed to be trustworthy precedent. They drew attention to the political space that was available.

We have no reliable accounts as to what words the imperial couple exchanged in private or in public, not even an equivalent of *The Pillow Book of Sei-Shonagon*, but that famous medieval text illuminates one feature shared by both Oriental and Byzantine court society: the significance of court hierarchy, costumes and colours.⁸⁹ In particular, the existence of eunuchs creates a threefold set of gendered roles in medieval China and Byzantium, and breaks with the binary opposition between male and female, creating an additional in-between and go-between category. By establishing institutional roles for de-sexed men, ancient Oriental societies sought to avoid the emergence of a hereditary court hierarchy, as well as providing for the seclusion and protection of women. But in the medieval period eunuchs are found only in those societies with a developed courtly life and ritual.⁹⁰ They may be jailers as well as protectors of the emperor's womenfolk and children, but by collaborating with empresses eunuchs often support successful rule from 'behind the curtain' (as can be seen in imperial China until 1918).⁹¹ In Byzantium many generations of empresses exploit the existence of eunuchs to try and achieve their ends. The noteworthy role of a third gender in sophisticated court society may possibly be paralleled at the court of Aachen, where, as Janet Nelson suggests, Charlemagne's unmarried daughters filled a role comparable to

⁸⁸ Prokopios preserves a glowing account of her statue at the Arkadianai: see *Buildings*, I.xi.8, ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing and G. Downey (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), 88–90; *Constantinople*, para. 81 (158).

⁸⁹ *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*, trans. and ed. Ivan Morris (Harmondsworth, 1971).

⁹⁰ Katharine Ringrose, 'Living in the Shadows: Eunuchs and Gender in Byzantium', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), *Third Sex, Third Gender* (New York, 1994); Katharine Ringrose, 'Eunuchs as Cultural Mediators', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, xxiii (1996); Shaun Tougher, 'Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview, with Special Reference to their Creation and Origin', in Liz James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* (London, 1997); on eunuchs in China, see R. H. van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (Leiden, 1961), 29–30, 87–8, 254–6.

⁹¹ See Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress: The Life and Times of Tz'u-Hsi, 1835–1908, Empress Dowager of China* (London, 1972).

that of the eunuchs of the East (although they did not deprive themselves of sexual pleasures).⁹²

CONCLUSION

Whether they had the support of court eunuchs or not, the number of occasions when empresses appear to have taken initiatives beyond the call of the loyal wife imply a definite capacity to manipulate forces within and without the Great Palace in which they were housed. The imperial ideology inherited from late antiquity, with all its emphasis on precedent, tradition and religious virtues, had not removed the possibility of female rule. There were no fixed regulations for the wives of emperors, beyond the established notion of conforming to tradition. Many empresses were able to adapt tradition to suit their own purposes. The imperial structures required empresses. Widowed empresses, in particular, appeared in public doing things that may have been understood by some as contrary to the prevailing male norms — but they got away with such actions and speeches because they were empresses. Even as heads of households, women could exercise a certain power; this was an accepted facet of Byzantine society. As such, feminine authority is recorded in a textual neutrality, however much individual authors fear and condemn the women who wield it. And partly through the well-known stories of particularly courageous or outrageous women, the potential for female initiatives had been sown.

What these stories suggest is that when men behave in an insufficiently imperial style, or are just indecisive or weak, women can act in their place. This is not conceived as a permanent replacement, for feminine rule in turn tends to reinforce patriarchal tradition. But the importance to Byzantium of such a temporary replacement of male by female leadership makes it necessary to look beyond those male-authored texts, and later reinforcement by the Gibbons of our time, which describe such women as weak or wicked, subservient or Jezebels, evil-minded or just bad.

Despite the semblance of a highly stratified, hierarchical and conservative society, wives of emperors in Byzantium could draw on the three strands of resources elaborated above, some manifested in visual evidence of the imperial feminine in Byzantium.

⁹² Janet L. Nelson, 'La Famille de Charlemagne', *Byzantion*, lxi (1995), esp. 211.

At no point did power and influence consolidate an established and fixed role for empresses. It could only add to the store of example and precedent on which later women might draw. Nothing altered the patriarchal order of Byzantine society which persisted to the end of the empire, and young princesses continue to be sacrificed to the needs of foreign policy, particularly in the last centuries, as the dreadful fate of little Simonis records.⁹³

Nonetheless, traditions attached to the ideas of the imperial feminine inspired and facilitated the exercise of power by many imperial women, both those born in the purple, such as Zoe and Theodora in the eleventh century, as well as foreign brides who married into the dynasties of Komnenos and Palaiologos in later periods. And in the eighth and ninth centuries Irene and Theodora proved able to reverse the reforming policy of the iconoclast dynasty of Leo III, exploiting circumstances to manipulate court tensions and divisions, and even to resist the policies of their husbands. The renewed strength of Byzantium, its defeat of the Arab threat to the Queen City itself, and the final restoration of icons, occur more or less at the same time. Drawing upon and strengthening the imperial feminine, women become co-architects of the triumph of religious images, as they argue the case using the essentially conservative and traditional instruments of survival: faith in the holy persons to save, cure, heal and protect. Through their determination, they help both to ensure the persistence of Byzantine religious art and the popular devotion to icons, as well as to perpetuate traditions of the feminine exercise of imperial power. In turn, it can be argued, this defining characteristic of the eastern empire assists in its survival for a further five hundred years.

King's College, London

Judith Herrin

⁹³ Married before the legal age to Kral Milutin of Bulgaria, who was forty years her senior and raped her at the age of eight, she could never bear a child. After an utterly miserable life she was eventually widowed and permitted to return to Byzantium.



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Author(s): Judith Evans-Grubbs

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ABDUCTION MARRIAGE IN ANTIQUITY: A LAW OF CONSTANTINE (*CTh* IX. 24. 1) AND ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT*

By JUDITH EVANS-GRUBBS

On 1 April A.D. 326 the Emperor Constantine issued a strongly worded edict (*CTh* IX. 24. 1) violently attacking the practice of abduction marriage or bride theft.¹ Addressed 'to the people' ('ad populum'), the law demands the punishment of all persons involved in such cases, including even the girl herself and her parents, if they had later agreed to the marriage of their daughter with her abductor. This edict marks the first explicit recognition in Roman law of marriage by abduction, although it is clear from other literary sources that the phenomenon was not new to the age of Constantine.

The real significance of the Constantinian law and the motivations behind it have never been properly examined, and more than one scholar has attributed its promulgation to Constantine's adoption of the Christian ideal of sexual purity. But such an explanation misunderstands both the nature of the practice attacked by the emperor, and the reasons for his opposition. The purpose of this study is to clarify the purpose and background of this late antique law, and to shed light on a hitherto ignored aspect of ancient society by comparing the description of *raptus* found in *CTh* IX. 24. 1 with modern ethnographical accounts of abduction marriage in areas of the Mediterranean today and with portrayals of the same practice in earlier Greek and Latin literature.

First, the law itself, as it has been preserved in the *Theodosian Code*, the compilation made under Theodosius II of extracts from the imperial constitutions of Constantine and his fourth- and early fifth-century successors:

Si quis nihil cum parentibus puellae ante depectus invitam eam rapuerit vel volentem abduxerit patrociniū ex eius responsione sperans, quam propter vitium levitatis et sexus mobilitatem atque consili a postulationibus et testimoniis omnibusque rebus iudiciariis antiqui penitus arcuerunt, nihil ei secundum ius vetus prosit puellae responsio, sed ipsa puella potius societate criminis obligetur. (1) Et quoniam parentum saepe custodiae nutricum fabulis et pravis suasionibus deluduntur, his primum, quarum detestabile ministerium fuisse arguitur redemptique discursus, poena immineat, ut eis meatus oris et faucium, qui nefaria hortamenta protulerit, liquentis plumbi ingestione claudatur. (2) Et si voluntatis adsensio detegitur in virgine, eadem qua raptor severitate plectatur, cum neque his impunitas praestanda sit, quae rapiuntur invitae, cum et domi se usque ad coniunctionis diem servare potuerint et, si fores raptoris frangerentur audacia, vicinorum opem clamoribus quaerere seque omnibus tueri conatibus. Sed his poenam leviores inponimus, solamque eis parentum negari successionem praecipimus. (3) Raptor autem indubitate convictus si appellare voluerit, minime audiat. (4) Si quis vero servus raptus facinus dissimulatione praeteritum aut pactione transmissum detulerit in publicum, Latinitate donetur aut, si Latinus sit, civis fiat Romanus: parentibus, quorum maxime vindicta intererat, si patientiam praebuerint ac dolorem compresserint, deportatione

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¹ The following abbreviations have been used:
CTh = *Codex Theodosianus* ed. Th. Mommsen and P. Meyer (1903).

Campbell = J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (1964).

Desanti = L. Desanti, 'Costantino, il ratto e il matrimonio riparatore', *SDHI* 1986, 195–217.

Grodzynski = D. Grodzynski, 'Ravies et coupables: un essai d'interprétation de la loi IX. 24. 1 du Code Théodosien', *MEFRA* 96 (1984), 697–726.

Herzfeld = M. Herzfeld, 'Gender Pragmatics: Agency, Speech, and Bride-Theft in a Cretan Mountain Village', *Anthropology* 9 (1985), 25–44.

Magnarella = P. J. Magnarella, *Tradition and Change in a Turkish Town* (1964).

Bates = D. G. Bates, 'Normative and Alternative Systems of Marriage among the Yoruk of southeastern Turkey', *Anthropological Quarterly* 47 (1974), 270–87.

Kudat = A. Kudat, 'Institutional Rigidity and Individual Initiative in Marriages of Turkish Peasants', *ibid.*, 288–303.

Lockwood = W. G. Lockwood, 'Bride Theft and Social Maneuverability in Western Bosnia', *ibid.*, 253–69.

Stross = B. Stross, 'Tzeltal Marriage by Capture', *ibid.*, 328–45.

plectendis. (5) Participes etiam et ministros raptoris citra discretionem sexus eadem poena praecipimus subiugari, et si quis inter haec ministeria servilis condicionis fuerit deprehensus, citra sexus discretionem eum concremari iubemus.

If someone who has not previously made any agreement with a girl's parents should seize her although she is unwilling or if he should lead her away when she is willing, hoping for protection from the response of one whom, on account of the fault of frivolity and the fickleness of her sex and judgement, our ancestors completely excluded from making legal complaints and from giving testimony and from all judicial matters, (or: ... hoping for protection from her response which ... our ancestors completely excluded from legal complaints, etc.), the girl's response shall be of no use to him according to the ancient law, but rather the girl herself shall be made guilty by association in the crime. (1) And since often the watchfulness of parents is frustrated by the stories and wicked persuasions of nurses, these (the nurses) first of all, whose service is proved to have been hateful and whose talk is proved to have been bought, this punishment shall threaten: that the opening of their mouth and of their throat, which brought forth destructive encouragements, shall be closed by the swallowing of molten lead. (2) And if voluntary assent is revealed in the virgin, she shall be struck with the same severity as her abductor; impunity shall not be offered to those girls who are abducted against their will either, since they too could have kept themselves at home till their marriage day and, if the doors were broken down by the abductor's audacity, they could have sought help from the neighbours by their cries and could have defended themselves with all their efforts. But we impose a lighter penalty on these girls, and order that only legal succession to their parents is to be denied them. (3) Moreover, if the abductor who has been proved guilty without doubt should wish to appeal, he shall certainly not be heard. (4) But if any slave should bring forth into public the fact that the crime of abduction has been neglected by deception or disregarded by an agreement (between the abductor and the girl's parents), he shall be rewarded with Latin status, or if he already has Latin status, he shall become a Roman citizen: the parents, for whom revenge (for the abduction) was the major concern, if they displayed forbearance and repressed their sorrow, shall be punished with exile. (5) We order that partners and accomplices of the abductor also be subjected to the same punishment without regard to sex; and if among these attendants anyone of servile status should be caught, we order that person to be burned without regard to sex.²

Although the manuscripts of the *Theodosian Code* give a date of 1 April 320 for the publication of this edict, some scholars, following Otto Seeck, have redated it to 326 and have connected it with several other laws of 326, all of which are thought to involve sexual offences and to have formed a sort of 'legislative package' aimed at curbing sexual immorality.³ The dates of Constantinian laws are particularly prone to confusion in the manuscripts, and it is probable that *CTh* ix. 24. 1 was in fact issued in 326 and not 320. But there is no reason to assume that this constitution on abduction was originally part of a longer law simply because, like many other Constantinian laws, it is concerned with sexual relationships. Indeed, its true intent and context are better understood if it is examined by itself.

The edict against abduction is clearly one of Constantine's crueller and more irrational laws. That he considers *raptus* a particularly heinous offence is indicated by the fact that this is one of the few cases where delation of a master by his own slave is not only encouraged, but actually rewarded.⁴ Even the girl who was carried off against her will is penalized by being deprived of her right of succession to her parents. It should be noted, however, that although *CTh* ix. 24. 1 has often been described as a 'rape law', the crime of *raptus* against which this edict is directed is not rape. Rather,

² All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. My translation of *CTh* ix. 24. 1 differs in some important respects from that given by Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (1952).

³ O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (1919), 61, 63; followed by A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (1948), 199; T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981), 220 and *The New Empire of Diocletian and*

Constantine (1982), 77; and Desanti. Other scholars, however, including Grodzynski and Mommsen, retain the 320 date.

⁴ Another law of Constantine, *CTh* ix. 5. 1, declares that a slave or freedman who dares to inform on his master or patron is to be denied a hearing and crucified. But cf. *CTh* ix. 9. 1 (326 or 329), which also encourages delation by slaves. On use of a slave informant in *CTh* ix. 24. 1, see Grodzynski, 702.

Constantine's law attacks the abduction of an unmarried girl by a man who has not made a formal betrothal agreement with her but who hopes to force her parents' consent to what is essentially a *de facto* marriage.

The true nature of the situation described in this law becomes clear when it is set alongside accounts of abduction marriage in traditional rural societies today, particularly in the area of the eastern Mediterranean. The purpose of these analogies is not to suggest a direct continuity of the practice of bride theft from antiquity to the present, but to use the reports of anthropologists working in communities where bride theft is still known or where it has only recently disappeared to provide a gloss for the more enigmatic and scattered evidence from antiquity. In particular, the attitude shown by communities today toward the participants in a marriage by abduction can illuminate and explain the perspective of Constantine's law, whose harshness has often puzzled scholars.

I. THE DYNAMICS OF ABDUCTION

Marriage by abduction functions as an alternative to the arranged marriage preceded by betrothal. Betrothal, generally considered the 'correct' way of contracting a marriage, is an agreement entered into by the families of the bride and groom (more precisely, by their fathers). The betrothal is generally preceded by protracted negotiations between the two family heads, each of whom is anxious to determine the suitability of the prospective son or daughter-in-law, and to secure the best terms possible for his own family. The future groom may have some say in the negotiations, and perhaps even suggest possible brides for consideration by his parents; how much the male actually participates in choosing his wife depends on his family and the society. The future bride, on the other hand, is a passive participant and is expected to accept the partner chosen for her by her parents, who have spent considerable time and energy investigating the possible suitors and have the expertise necessary to make such a decision. In such societies it is unlikely that the girl, who may be considerably younger than her intended husband, has had much opportunity to get to know any members of the opposite sex outside her family, and she is usually willing to accept their recommendation.

Betrothal, then, is a social and indeed a political pact, formed on the basis of economic and social factors of concern to the family as a unit and to the community. The personal feelings of the prospective couple are not of great concern, though obviously a certain amount of mutual attraction is desirable, and if one party finds the other repugnant, the match is unlikely to be successful. It is generally agreed that it would be impractical to undertake such a serious endeavour as marriage on the basis of the personal whims of uninformed youth. 'Love' does not enter into the betrothal arrangements, even though the culture may have an ideology of romantic love.⁵

Disruption of an already settled marriage pact can have serious repercussions, since a unilaterally broken betrothal will cause great offence to the rejected party and his or her family. Thus a betrothal, once concluded, is rarely broken. If the male breaks off the engagement, the rejected girl's chances of making a good marriage are virtually ruined; the community will assume that she was rejected because of some serious fault, probably moral.⁶ Rejection of a suitor by the girl's family, either after he has made an offer or, worse still, after a betrothal has already been concluded, is an attack on his male honour and must be avenged if he is to retain his standing in the community. Therefore the refusal of a suitor by a girl's parents, or the breaking off of a betrothal, can provide the motivation for an abduction.⁷ Abduction may also occur if the male, forced to postpone his marriage plans for financial or family reasons, becomes impatient and decides to take matters into his own hands. Or the threat of another suitor may cause him to force the issue by stealing the girl outright.⁸

⁵ cf. Bates, 276; Campbell, 124.

⁶ Campbell, 127–8, cf. 201; J. du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (1974), 98.

⁷ Campbell, 124–32 indicates clearly the relationship between betrothal and abduction. Cf. Herzfeld, 28:

sometimes refusal by the girl's father may be an 'intentional challenge' to the suitor to abduct her.

⁸ Bates, 276–7; Kudat, 291. Cf. Herzfeld, 30–8 (a first-person narrative by the abductor).

The would-be abductor gathers together male companions of his own age. The raiding party may waylay the intended bride outside her home while she is going about her daily chores, for instance at the well, or they may break into her house and seize her. Often violence ensues. The girl's father and brothers will attempt to defend her; the conflict may result in death, particularly for the abductor.⁹

If the abduction is successful, the girl is taken to a place outside the village, perhaps in the woods, where she cannot be found. She may then be raped by her prospective husband, but not necessarily; what is important is that her reputation will be irreversibly damaged, since it will be assumed by her family and by the community that she is no longer a virgin.¹⁰ Soon her family will have called in the law, and the abductor will be arrested. The girl is then asked if she wants to marry her abductor or prefers to prosecute. Almost always she agrees to a marriage, even though she may have originally resisted abduction; she knows she will not be able to make a good marriage with anyone else after her reputation has been so compromised.¹¹

The girl's family will be very angry for a while, perhaps for as long as several years. Eventually, however, there will be a reconciliation, particularly if the couple have a baby. Marriages formed by abduction can be as successful as arranged ones, though problems may arise later. The availability of divorce may therefore be relevant to the frequency and social acceptability of abduction marriage in a particular society.¹²

The arranged marriage preceded by betrothal joins two families and reinforces familial and community structures. Bride theft, on the other hand, can be a socially divisive marriage strategy. From the point of view of these traditional Mediterranean communities, marriage by abduction subverts the intentions and authority of the persons who, in a well-ordered society, should be responsible for the conclusion of the marriage—the fathers of the couple. In a marriage by abduction the initiative is taken by the individual participants themselves, not by their families. Paradoxically, however, in those societies in which the arranged marriage is (at least in theory) the norm, abduction can be a common and even, under certain circumstances, a socially acceptable marriage strategy, in spite of publicly expressed disapproval.¹³

From the description of abduction given above, it would appear that the initiative is entirely that of the abductor, and that the abducted girl has no more choice in the matter than if she had been formally betrothed by her parents. In reality, however, the *rapta* may be a more active participant in her own 'theft' than such a scenario suggests. There is a thin line between an abduction in which the girl, though she was not aware beforehand of plans for her kidnapping, anticipates some sort of action and is willing to be 'stolen', and an actual elopement planned by the two young people together. The disguising as an abduction of what is in fact a mutual agreement serves two useful purposes: it obscures any indication of sexual initiative on the girl's part, which would be regarded with horror by her parents and by the rest of the community, and it preserves the male's honour and demonstrates convincingly his courage and manliness.¹⁴

If the abductor was previously rejected by the girl's family, it is imperative that he recover his lost honour and abduction is the only effective way to do so. But even without such provocation, the successful completion of an abduction always increases the male's standing in the community, for it is a daring and dangerous undertaking which could have resulted in his death. A suitor may even be goaded into an

⁹ Bates, 275; Campbell, 129; Herzfeld, 37–8; Lockwood, 253–4, cf. 259; Magnarella, 116.

¹⁰ Raped: Bates, 275; Kudat, 291; Stross, 340; cf. du Boulay, 93 (op. cit., n. 6). But rape is not necessary to effect the purpose of abduction: cf. Campbell, 130; Herzfeld, 29.

¹¹ Bates, 275; Campbell, 130; Lockwood, 254; Stross, 340–1; Herzfeld, 39–41, another first-hand account: the girl refused to marry her abductor, only to be abducted by him again.

¹² cf. Lockwood, 266–7, on the frequency of bride theft in a Moslem area of Yugoslavia, where the

possibility of divorce for either party is an important factor in 'reducing the hazards of marriage by theft'. Divorce would be much less easy in Catholic or Greek Orthodox communities.

¹³ Bates, 272, claims that among the Yoruk of Turkey twenty per cent of all marriages take place by means of bride theft (or elopement, which cannot always be distinguished from abduction). Cf. Magnarella, 113; Campbell, 130; Stross, 340; 342 (Mayan community in Mexico).

¹⁴ Kudat, 292; cf. Lockwood, 254, 260; Campbell, 308; Stross, 339.

abduction by the girl's family as a test of his manliness and suitability as a son-in-law.¹⁵ Sometimes, when a marriage has already been arranged (including provisions for dowry or bridal gifts), the groom and the girl's father may even collude in staging an 'abduction' to save the cost of an expensive wedding ceremony.¹⁶

In societies where the bride in a properly arranged marriage is expected to bring a substantial dowry to her husband, marriage by abduction even has certain advantages for the girl's family, since no dowry can be demanded by an abductor.¹⁷ Conceivably a family that hoped to avoid giving a dowry could encourage their own daughter's abduction, but although complicity of the bride's parents with the abductor is known, it is prompted by other considerations, and few parents would be so little concerned with their daughter's welfare and their own reputation as to do such a thing (or at least to admit to it).¹⁸ And abduction marriage occurs just as often in societies where brideprice is given by the groom rather than dowry by the bride's parents; indeed, a high brideprice is often the reason given for abductions, since a man can thereby get his bride 'free'. In such cases, the abductor's family may actually encourage him in his theft, but the abducted bride's family is much more angry and bitter than in societies where the bride brings a dowry.¹⁹

And although to us there is clearly a difference between elopement or a 'mock' bride theft, where the girl is a willing participant in an act which she may have had equal responsibility for planning, and 'genuine' bride theft, particularly in cases where the girl is raped or brutalized, we should not assume that the same distinction is made by societies where abduction marriage is a well-known phenomenon. On the contrary, there is always a presumption, on the part of the abductors and of the community as a whole, that the abducted girl was willing to be taken, and even if she puts up resistance and is subjected to violence during the abduction, she is still considered partly responsible.²⁰ The fact that the victim nearly always agrees in the end to marry her captor only reinforces this assumption.

Furthermore, elopement, 'mock' bride theft and 'genuine' bride theft all have the same end result: a marriage is made without proper preliminaries, through the action of the participant(s) rather than the decision of their parents. Hence all are equally 'anomic'. In the eyes of an authoritarian law, whether or not the bride was willing to be abducted may well be irrelevant. And whereas abduction and elopement are generally regarded with equanimity by the community as a whole (apart from the bride's family and perhaps also the groom's), the law takes a very different view of the matter, and abduction in particular is often subjected to strong legal sanctions. However, the threat of heavy penalties, even death, does not affect the popularity of abduction as a marriage strategy.²¹ The only effective deterrent is the violent response of the girl's family, and for the abductor the gain in his prestige in the community as the result of a successful abduction, and the possession of the bride of his own choice more than compensate for the risk he must take.

Finally, it should be noted that there appear to be no geographical or religious boundaries within which the phenomenon of marriage by abduction occurs—it is

¹⁵ cf. Herzfeld, 30–8, whose narrator was virtually railroaded into abducting his bride by his own relatives and her father.

¹⁶ I have found two references to such staged abductions: S. Silverman, *Three Bells of Civilization* (1975), 201–2 (Umbrian hill-town); and L. Mair, *Marriage* (1971), 97 (African tribes). Unlike 'real' abduction marriages, the other financial components of a marriage agreement (dowry in Italy; bridewealth in Africa) have been arranged in advance and it is only the absence of a proper wedding ceremony that makes this 'irregular'.

¹⁷ Campbell, 131. But cf. M.-E. Handman, *La violence et la ruse: Hommes et femmes dans un village grec* (1983), 85; three of the five cases of abduction/elopement in the Thessalian community she studies ended not only in reconciliation but with a full wedding ceremony and the handing over by the bride's parents of her dowry and trousseau.

¹⁸ Handman (n. 17) claims that some families actu-

ally do this in Greece and south Italy, in contrast to the village she studied where this does *not* happen. She cites no evidence for this claim and I have come across no cases where a girl's parents are said to have contrived an abduction in order to avoid a dowry, nor any where the abductor and the girl's parents act in collusion for this purpose.

¹⁹ Bates, 276–7 (among lower classes; abductors' families who are better off tend to pay bride price); cf. Kudat, 291–2 (bride price much less in cases of abduction); Stross, 343.

²⁰ Herzfeld, 29–30.

²¹ Despite the imposition in Yugoslavia in the nineteenth century of the death penalty for the groom, corporal punishment for members of the wedding party, and defrocking of the priest who officiated at the wedding, abduction marriages continued to take place well into the twentieth century (Lockwood, 254).

found among Christians (Greece), Moslems (Turkey, Bosnia), and others (Tzeltal Indians in Mexico), in endogamous societies (Turkey) and those which place restrictions on the marriages of close kin (Greece, Tzeltal), and throughout the world, from Mexico to India. The only characteristic that these various cultures have in common is the fact that the arranged marriage, made by the fathers of the couple involved, is the socially approved norm.

II. ABDUCTION MARRIAGE AND *CTh* IX. 24. 1

We can now examine *CTh* IX. 24. 1 against this background. The first sentence of the law tells us that the situation is the same as that described in ethnographical accounts of bride theft: a man has not made an agreement (i.e. a betrothal) with the girl's parents but instead has abducted her, 'hoping for protection from her response'. Clearly, Constantine's *raptor* is operating on the same principle as modern-day abductors, that once the girl has been abducted and possibly (though not necessarily) raped, she will agree to marry him and will persuade her parents that that is the best solution. Constantine declares that because 'ancient law' declared that a girl's testimony was worth nothing in court (due to her 'sexus mobilitatem'), so also her agreement to a marriage with her abductor will be considered worthless. This is one of several laws of Constantine which express a low opinion of feminine self-control and behaviour, and its reference to female emotional instability is in line with third-century imperial rescripts which confirm traditional prohibitions on women's legal activities.²² However, the assertion in *CTh* IX. 24. 1 that 'the ancients' forbade women to give evidence in all court cases is untrue: under classical Roman law, women certainly could testify in cases in which they or their close relations were involved.²³

Next the law decrees an exceptionally gruesome and sadistic punishment for the girl's nurse, who is here presumed to have acted as the instigator and abettor of her mistress's vicious inclinations. The venal nurse or maidservant who helps to conceal her mistress's sexual misconduct is familiar to us from classical literature, and indeed there appears to be some basis in fact for the assumption that the *nutrix* may be in part responsible for her charge's kidnapping.²⁴ A girl who actively consented is to suffer the same penalty as her abductor; oddly, this penalty is never actually defined in the law, but apparently it involved the death sentence. Even a girl who did not consent, but who did not raise enough clamour to alert the neighbours is still to be punished by being deprived of her rights to inherit from her parents.²⁵ Presumably she would still be able to contract a legal marriage with someone other than her abductor, though her marriageability would have been seriously damaged by the abduction and her loss of inheritance rights.

Scholars have always been appalled that the abducted girl is penalized even if she was unwilling. But the law is simply making the same assumption as modern-day abductors and their communities—that if the girl has allowed herself to be taken (forcibly or not), she has consented to the union. This may seem a strange notion of 'consent', but an analogy could be made with the Roman legal idea of 'consent' to marriage. The bride's consent to a marriage was required under Roman law, and a marriage was not considered valid unless both parties had actually agreed to be married. But a young girl who did not actively raise objections to her parents' choice

²² cf. *CTh* IX. 1. 3 (322); *CJ* II. 12. 21 (315), for disapproval of women's involvement in legal affairs; and *CJ* V. 37. 22. 5 (326) and *CTh* III. 16. 1 (331) for a poor opinion of women's behaviour and motives. Cf. S. Dixon, 'Infirmis Sexus: Womanly Weakness in Roman Law', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 52 (1984), 343–71.

²³ In fact Constantine himself knew better: cf. *CTh* IX. 1. 3 (322).

²⁴ e.g., the nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, or the slave girl in Lysias' *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*; also Theocritus 6; Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* 638; also cf. Juvenal VI. 352. Cf. Bates, 275 on female accomplices

in the household.

²⁵ On deprivation of inheritance rights as the penalty for a girl marrying without her parents' permission, see P. Merêa, 'Le mariage *sine consensu parentum* dans le droit romain vulgaire occidental', *RIDA* 5 (1950), 203–17, esp. 208. Generally a girl's dowry was considered part, or even all, of her patrimony; it is not clear whether *CTh* IX. 24. 1 intends to prevent parents from providing a previously abducted daughter with a dowry, which, although not actually a legal requirement for marriage under Roman law, was generally considered an essential part of a marriage settlement.

of husband was assumed to have consented.²⁶ The difference is, of course, that under Constantine's law only the girl's *successful* resistance to an abduction would be construed as an objection on her part, and a *fait accompli* would therefore imply her acquiescence.

In fact, the emperor's reasoning that the *rapta* could have summoned help if she had really wanted to is not as tendentious as it sounds. Houses in Mediterranean villages, then as now, were built quite close together, and there was very little 'private space' for the individual. It is unlikely that an adolescent girl would have had a room of her own, or even an opportunity to be alone inside the house where she could be snatched by an abductor without alerting the rest of the household—unless she had made arrangements ahead of time, perhaps with the aid of her trusty old nurse. It is, of course, possible that an abductor might force his way into a girl's home and seize her in the face of armed resistance from her family. The law foresees this possibility, and such resistance is mentioned in both modern and ancient accounts of abduction. But although Constantine's edict decrees a mitigation of the penalty for a girl really seized against her will, it is clear that such niceties as the victim's willingness mean little. In the eyes of the law, an abduction that has been allowed to succeed becomes *ipso facto* an elopement. As for the possibility of the girl being seized outside her house, where she would be more vulnerable (and where, as we know from both ancient and modern sources, abduction was just as likely to take place), the emperor's attitude is clear: she should have stayed safely indoors until she was properly married off by her parents.

Anthropologists have shown that, in those Mediterranean societies in which bride theft still occurs, anything from a violent kidnapping and rape to what is in effect a mutually agreed elopement is described by the same term.²⁷ Even when the society recognizes the difference in individual cases, the same assumptions about the girl's willingness and the stain on her reputation result whether she has been raped or has run away with her lover (although evidence of actual violence and resistance on the part of the girl will moderate her blameworthiness). This confusion of what to us would be quite different situations is found also in Constantine's law, which attempts to legislate for all cases of *raptus* simultaneously.

Thus we see that in *CTh* ix. 24. 1 all variations of the bride theft scenario are condemned equally. The young lover, who in order to protect the reputation of his beloved has staged an 'abduction' rather than eloping with her outright, is as guilty as the violent rapist who breaks in with an armed band of companions and seizes a completely helpless and unwilling victim. Parents who try to make the best of a bad situation by agreeing to a marriage between their daughter and the man who has destroyed her reputation (and her marriageability, since a previously abducted girl has very poor marriage prospects) are put in the same category as those who pretend not to notice an elopement or even push a young man into taking their daughter; they are, at best, accessories after the fact. Here the Emperor was attacking directly the fundamental reason for the success of abduction as a marriage strategy, for even if a girl's parents had known nothing of a *raptor's* plans to kidnap their daughter and were truly angry and upset by the abduction, they would have been far more likely to accept the union made without their consent than to repudiate the abductor and take back their daughter.

In order to prevent this concealment of a daughter's abduction, Constantine encourages even slaves who know of the crime to report it. And if a slave can turn informer, then so certainly can neighbours, rival suitors or personal enemies of the girl's family. *Raptus* is no longer a family affair, but has become a public offence, in much the same way that adultery had been made a public offence by Augustus more than three hundred years earlier. At that time the *Lex Julia de adulteriis* had thrown open prosecution of an adulterous wife to the general public if (after a period of sixty

²⁶ *D.* xxiii. 1. 12 (Ulpian); cf. S. Treggiari, 'Consent to Roman Marriage: Some Aspects of Law and Reality' in *EMC/CV* 26 (1982), 34–44.

²⁷ Lockwood, 260; du Boulay (op. cit., n. 6), 92–4;

Magnarella, 13; cf. Bates, 275. Elsewhere in Turkey, however, a verbal distinction is made between kidnapping and elopement: Kudat, 290–5.

days) neither the woman's husband nor her father had prosecuted.²⁸ Ironically, Constantine himself abrogated this provision of the Augustan adultery law in 326 (the same year that he promulgated *CTh* ix. 24. 1) by decreeing that a woman could be charged with adultery only by her husband or male members of her own family.²⁹

Later imperial law realized that the penalties stipulated for abduction marriage by Constantine were unreasonably harsh. A law of 349 says simply: 'Although the authority of the former law, in which our glorious father had ordered that very fierce vengeance be taken against *raptores*, still stands, we, however, have established only a capital penalty, lest any delay in avenging the crime should arise under the pretext of too fierce a judgment'.³⁰ In other words, because of the severe punishments meted out to all concerned, officials had been reluctant to apply the penalty required by law, perhaps even to bring a conviction.

The 'capital penalty' (*capitalis poena*) here presumably means execution by the sword, and therefore Constantine's penalty, which is not stated in the text of *CTh* ix. 24. 1 as we have it, may have been *summum supplicium*—that is, an especially atrocious and degrading form of the death penalty, such as crucifixion or condemnation *ad bestias* or, most likely, burning. Although *summa supplicia* in the fourth century were most often reserved for slaves or those of very low social status (as in the case of the *ministeria servilis condicionis* in *CTh* ix. 24. 1), they could be applied to persons of any social class found guilty of particularly offensive crimes. Under Constantine, for instance, kidnappers of children (*plagiarii*) were sentenced *ad bestias*, if they were slaves or freedmen, or to fight in gladiatorial games if free-born; *haruspices* who practised their rites within the home of a private citizen were to be burned, regardless of social status; and parricides were to undergo the ancient penalty of the *culleus*.³¹

Constantine's harsh condemnation of *raptores* and all who help them suggests that, like kidnappers and parricides, abductors were originally subjected to the most degrading and painful punishment possible, and not simply death by the sword. On the other hand, another law of Constantine, issued only a few days after the edict against *raptus*, declares that a guardian (*tutor*) who has seduced his virgin ward is to be deported and his property confiscated but adds that 'he ought to receive the penalty which the law impose on a *raptor*'—which may mean simply the death penalty.³² Perhaps the law had originally decreed crucifixion or condemnation to fight as a gladiator, both of which were abolished as criminal penalties during Constantine's reign. At any rate, it appears that the part of Constantine's law that specified the *raptor's* penalty was deleted sometime after its promulgation.³³

How many cases of *raptus* had actually been brought to the attention of the legal authorities? We should ask who stood to gain from bringing charges. Disgruntled slaves, or hostile neighbours with a grudge against the family involved, or, most likely, another suitor, possibly one already betrothed to the girl, who had been upstaged by the abductor. Certainly the girl's family would prefer to hush the whole affair up and hope that it was not exposed, since otherwise their daughter would at the very least be deprived of her inheritance rights and their new son-in-law would be executed.

The next law under the same title in the *Theodosian Code*, dated 374, demonstrates even more clearly the problems which an imperial law against abduction

²⁸ On the *Lex Julia de adulteriis* see J. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (1986), 127–32.

²⁹ *CTh* ix. 7. 2, dated 25 April 326.

³⁰ *CTh* ix. 24. 2. But slaves involved in cases of *raptus* are still to be burnt.

³¹ *Plagiarii* (defined in law as those who kidnap others' children): *CTh* ix. 18. 1 (315). *Haruspices*: *CTh* ix. 16. 1 (319). Parricides: *CTh* ix. 15. 1 (318).

³² *CTh* ix. 8. 1, issued 4 April 326. It is difficult to know exactly what *capitalis poena* meant in the fourth century: *CTh* ix. 10. 1 (317?) explicitly contrasts *supplicium capitale* with *relegatio aut deportatio insulae*, implying that exile was no longer considered a capital penalty. But *capitalis poena* may still have meant exile with confiscation of property (*deportatio*), at least for

honestiores, in which case *CTh* ix. 24. 2 envisaged a substitute of exile for execution. Cf. P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (1970), 103–52; and D. Grodzynski, 'Tortures mortelles et catégories sociales' in *Du châtement dans la cité* (Collection de l'École Française de Rome 79, 1984), 361–403, who assumes that *capitalis poena* is beheading and thus distinguished from *summa supplicia* (cf. Garnsey, 104–5).

³³ C. Dupont, *Le droit criminel dans les constitutions de Constantin*. 1 *Les infractions* (1953), assumes (p. 48) that the penalty omitted in the *Theodosian Code* was burning, as do Barnes (op. cit., n. 3), 220; and Grodzynski, 712.

marriage could create. It calls for the immediate prosecution of 'marriage contracted by the crime of abduction', either by a relative wishing to expunge the blot on the family's honour or by a third party inspired by 'the common hatred of crimes'. But, the law continues, if for some reason the bringing of charges is delayed, there will henceforth be a five-year 'statute of limitations'. After five years, 'there will be no opportunity for accusation or for contesting the marriage or the offspring [of the union]'.³⁴ This is the first unambiguous reference to marriage and offspring (*coniugium* and *subolis*) in the series of fourth-century laws, and it indicates clearly that the legislation on *raptus* was attacking not the wanton and violent act of rape, but an apparently quite successful marriage strategy. A marriage by abduction which has lasted five years is clearly a stable union, and there could well be children involved whose legitimacy (and source of support) would be endangered if their parents were suddenly subjected to prosecution and conviction. The fact that the Emperor anticipates that no one would have prosecuted at the time the abduction occurred and that a marriage did indeed take place indicates that the harsh penalties prescribed for all participants and the illegality of such a marriage were not effective deterrents.

Although Constantine's edict is the first explicit reference to bride theft in extant Roman law, we should not assume that the practice of abduction marriage was a new phenomenon in the fourth century A.D., nor that there was necessarily an increase in the number of abductions in late antiquity. In fact, earlier references in Greek and Latin literature outside the legal sources suggest that Constantine's law was an imperial response to a widely known and not infrequently practised custom which, though of great antiquity, had not previously been recognized as a criminal offence by Roman jurists or their emperors.

III. ABDUCTION MARRIAGE IN LITERATURE

Marriage by abduction is, of course, a popular theme in ancient myth and legend. The violent abduction by a god or hero of a young girl (or, as in the case of Ganymede, a boy) for sexual purposes is a well-known theme in early Greek epic poetry.³⁵ Plutarch remarks that among the many similarities between Theseus, the refounder of Athens and Romulus, the founder of Rome, is the fact that they both undertook *harpagē gunaikōn*—Theseus by the abduction of Helen and Romulus by the famous 'rape of the Sabine women'.³⁶

Herodotus opens his *Histories* with the Persian version of the origins of the traditional enmity between Persia and the Greeks. According to the Persians, East-West hostility was the unfortunate result of a series of reciprocal abductions, culminating in the abduction of Helen by the Trojan prince Paris. For the Greeks to declare war on the Trojans in order to avenge one woman's abduction was, according to Herodotus' Persian informants, a foolish over-reaction: 'For it is clear that these women would not have been abducted if they had not wanted to be'.³⁷

The attitude which Herodotus attributes to the Persians—that abducted women are more or less responsible for their own abduction—is essentially the same as the reaction of villagers in areas where bride theft occurs today, and explains the harsh declaration in Constantine's law which has so shocked scholars, that even the girls who were abducted against their will are to be penalized, '... since they too could have kept themselves at home till their marriage day and ... could have defended themselves with all their efforts'. The Persians' assumption gains some validity when we recall the circumstances of Helen's 'abduction' and indeed, anthropologists who have studied the dynamics of bride theft have concluded that 'women play an

³⁴ *CTh* ix. 24. 3, addressed to Maximinus, then praetorian prefect of Gaul.

³⁵ See C. A. Sowa, *Traditional Themes and the Homeric Hymns* (1984), 121–44. The words used to describe seizure for sexual purposes in the *Hymns* are *harpazo*, *haireō*, and *ago* (Sowa, 124).

³⁶ *Theseus* 2. 2; cf. 31–2; *Romulus* 9. For representa-

tions on Attic vases of Theseus in pursuit of a girl, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings', *JHS* 107 (1987), 131–53.

³⁷ Herod. i. 4. 2. Cf. also the Phoenicians' explanation of the *harpagē* of Io: she ran away with the Phoenician sailors willingly after discovering that she was pregnant by one of them (i. 5. 2).

important role in the arranging of their marriages through the use of such seemingly male-dominated options as bride theft'.³⁸

The most famous abduction of Greek myth is of course that of Persephone by Hades, ruler of the underworld, an account of which is found already by the first half of the seventh century B.C. in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*.³⁹ The cult of Persephone and the story of her abduction were well-known throughout the Greek (and later the Roman) world, not only in mainland Greece but also in southern Italy and Sicily. The Eleusinian Mysteries, commemorating the return of Persephone to her mother, continued to be celebrated until the end of the fourth century A.D., and the sacred rites at Eleusis may have involved a re-enactment of Persephone's abduction.⁴⁰ At Locri in southern Italy, a number of votive plaques (*pinakes*) found in the sanctuary of Persephone illustrate scenes of abduction of a girl by a 'young abductor' (not Hades); interestingly, in some of these scenes the girl is portrayed as willing and co-operative. Iconographically, these *pinakes* share many characteristics with representations of wedding processions on Greek vases, which also contain elements of abduction.⁴¹

Both the vases and the plaques could be interpreted as portraying vestiges of a very ancient ritual of abduction as part of the wedding celebration or as symbolizing the traumatic taking of the young bride from the nurturing atmosphere of her family into the unknown and frightening world of married life.⁴² Recently, it has been suggested that the iconographic similarities between scenes of abduction and wedding scenes in Greek art, and the intimations of complicity or willingness on the part of the abducted girl, reflect a perception deeply rooted in the Greek consciousness that sexual pursuit, followed by seizure, and marriage were essentially two sides of the same coin.⁴³

But is the relationship between abduction and marriage as it is represented in art only metaphorical, an expression of a mental attitude without any basis in current reality? Perhaps the artists and their contemporaries were familiar with the practice of abduction marriage in their own time. Marriages in archaic Sparta were said to have been contracted by way of abduction. Plutarch (writing in the late first-early second century A.D.) describes this as a ritual, and his interpretation has been followed by modern scholars.⁴⁴ Herodotus, however, mentions a more spontaneous incident of bride theft among the Spartan nobility in the late sixth century B.C.⁴⁵ Similarly, the 'rape' (*raptus*) of the Sabine women, one of the founding legends of Rome, can be seen as a projection into the mythical past of early Latin rites of passage which depicted marriage as the forcible seizure of a girl from her parents, but could also preserve the memory of an actual practice of bride theft in the archaic period.⁴⁶

By the Roman imperial period abduction marriage seems to have become something of a literary topos. *Raptus* appears as a popular topic for rhetorical declamation, along with other sensational subjects like kidnapping by pirates and the killing of adulterers taken *in flagranti delicto*. Six of the *Controversiae* of the elder Seneca and sixteen of the lesser *Declamations* attributed to Quintilian concern *raptus*.⁴⁷

³⁸ Quotation from the introduction to *AQ* 47, 'Kidnapping and Elopement as Alternative Systems of Marriage', by D. G. Bates, F. Conant, and A. Kudat, 233–7, at 236; cf. Magnarella, 16.

³⁹ See N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (1974), esp. 3–30 and 74 ff. On the motif of abduction while picking flowers: Sowa (op. cit., n. 35) 135 ff.

⁴⁰ Suggested by G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (1961), 261–4, but questioned by Richardson.

⁴¹ C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'The Young Abductor of the Locrian *Pinakes*', *BICS* 20 (1973), 12–21; and Ian Jenkins, 'Is there Life after Marriage? A Study of the Abduction Motif in Vase Paintings of the Athenian Wedding Ceremony', *BICS* 30 (1983), 137–45. I am grateful to J. J. Winkler for bringing these articles to my attention.

⁴² Sourvinou-Inwood 1973, 17–19; and Jenkins.

⁴³ Sourvinou-Inwood 1987 (op. cit., n. 36), esp. 139–41.

⁴⁴ *Lycurgus* 15.3; the word used is again *harpagē*. On marriage by capture at Sparta, see W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* (1968), 197–8.

⁴⁵ Herodotus vi. 65. 2: Demaratus stole the bride intended for Leotyichides by carrying her off (*harpazō* is the verb used).

⁴⁶ See M. Torelli, *Lavinio e Roma: Riti Iniziativi e Matrimonio tra Archeologia e Storia* (1984), 75–7; but cf. R. Kostler, 'Raub- und Kaufhe bei den Römern', *ZSS.RA* 65, (1947), 43–68, at 53–4.

⁴⁷ Citations are from M. Winterbottom's Loeb edition (1974) of the Elder Seneca and id., *The Minor Declamations Ascribed to Quintilian* (1984). The relevant texts are: *Contr.* I. 5; II. 3; III. 5; IV. 3; VII. 8; cf. VIII. 6; 'Quintilian', *Decl.* 247; 251; 252; 259; 262; 270; 276; 280; 286; 301; 309; 343; 349; 368; 370 and 383.

The premise in almost all of these is that the victim and/or her father have a choice between marriage (without dowry) to the *raptor* or his death. The declaimers then argue the case for and against the *raptor*. In his defence: he fell in love and asked for the girl in marriage, but the father delayed, so the suitor took matters into his own hands; or, he was drunk and egged on by his *sodales*. The case against the *raptor*: he attacked the girl's house with a gang of rowdy companions and broke down the doors ('effregit fores'; cf. *CTh* IX. 24. 1, 'si fores raptoris frangerentur audacia').⁴⁸

The details of the descriptions of *raptus* in the *Controversiae* are remarkably similar to those in Constantine's law: the *raptor* is always aided by companions (as also is the case in modern abductions), who make an assault on the girl's home; he then seeks marriage from the girl and her father.⁴⁹ The abduction generally involves actual rape (*stuprum*) and is very violent, and it may have been this brutal kind of *raptus* which *CTh* IX. 24. 1 attacked. In one case, the rhetor speaking on behalf of the *raptor* pleads that he had in fact asked for the girl's hand in marriage, but had been thwarted in his honourable intention by her father's unwillingness to give a definite answer.⁵⁰

The situations described in the Quintilianic declamations, which date from a somewhat later period, are more complicated and far-fetched, and generally involve outright rape without any other motive.⁵¹ An interesting exception is *Decl.* 259, which features a *dives*, his daughter, and a *pauper*. Both the girl and the poor man claim that he violated her, and the father (who owes his life to the *pauper*) instructs his daughter to choose marriage rather than death. Later it is discovered that no rape ever took place. The father, understandably concluding that he has been tricked into agreeing to a marriage he would not otherwise have approved, disinherits his daughter. The declaimer, speaking in the daughter's behalf, goes to great lengths to show that she was *not* in collusion with her alleged *raptor*, but rather had over-reacted to an attempted rape.⁵²

Interestingly, there are several cases where the speakers suggest that the *rapta* was not as unwilling a participant as she claimed to be, or that there was collusion between the *raptor* and the girl's father.⁵³ The same insinuations, which are not always without foundation, inform both Constantine's law and modern accounts of abduction marriage, and reflect the attitude of communities in which bride-theft is practised.

The relationship between the 'laws' cited by rhetorical writers and actual legal practice has been much debated by scholars.⁵⁴ The problem with any attempt to explain the rhetorical 'laws' is that the *raptus* described by the rhetors is always equated by scholars with rape, a crime for which we know both Greek and Roman law prescribed procedures quite unlike those proposed in the declamations. Roman law did not have a law against rape *per se*, but sexual violation could be prosecuted as *stuprum per vim* (illegal sexual intercourse by force), which fell under *vis publica*. A prosecution could also be brought for *iniuria*, which involved civil rather than criminal penalties. If the woman was thought to have been an unwilling participant who had yielded through force, she would not be punished for adultery or *stuprum*. The verb usually used to denote rape in classical Roman law is *violare*, not *rapere*. *Rapere*, the verb form of *raptus*, does not appear in the extant legal sources until the third century.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ 'Effregit fores': *Contr.* II. 3. *Sodales*: *Contr.* II 3; cf. IV. 3: 'Collegit ingentem numerum perditorum, expugnavit domum, vexavit puellam'. Drunk: *Contr.* VII. 8; *Decl.* 309. See Winterbottom's (1984) note on such excuses, p. 453.

⁴⁹ An exception is *Contr.* I. 5, where the same man 'rapuit' two girls successively in one night; here the crime would appear to be simple rape without any intention of marriage on the *raptor's* part.

⁵⁰ *Contr.* III. 5. The girl's father, in whose hands lies the choice between marriage and death for the *raptor*, is still refusing to make up his mind.

⁵¹ In three cases the *raptor* was put up to it by a third party: *Decl.* 252 and 270 (same situation); and, apparently, 343.

⁵² *Decl.* 259.

⁵³ *Rapta* in collusion with *raptor*: *Contr.* I. 5; *Decl.* 259, 262. Her father in collusion with *raptor*: *Contr.* II. 3; *Decl.* 349. On 'connivance and collusion' as rhetorical colours, see Winterbottom (op. cit., n. 47, 1984), 325.

⁵⁴ See S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (1969), esp. 84–132; G. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (1972), 312–37.

⁵⁵ *D.* XLVIII. 5. 30. 9 (Ulpian), 6. 3. 4 and 5. 2 (Marcian). See also *D.* XLVII. 10. 1 and 2, 10. 9. 4, 10. 10, and *Sententiae Pauli* v. 4. 4; Gardner (op. cit., n. 28), 118–21. Abduction or sexual abuse of unwilling freeborn boys was also a crime: *D.* XLVII. 11 pr. = *Sententiae Pauli* v. 4. 14; *Sent. Pauli* II 26. 12; cf. 13; see also *D.* XLVIII. 48. 6. 6. Cf. also Grodzynski, 719–21. *Rapere* in third-century legal text: n. 61 below.

The best explanation of this discrepancy in terminology is that the pre-Constantinian legal sources are not describing the same situation as either the *Controversiae* and *Declamations* or *CTh* IX 24. 1. Classical Roman law (and what we know of Greek law before the imperial period) was concerned with sexual violation, the victim of which might be a virgin, a married woman, or a widow, or even a male; Constantine's law is directed toward the abduction of an unmarried girl in order to force her into a marriage to which her parents had not consented. (It should be noted that *CTh* IX 24. 1 does not mention *stuprum per vim* or use the term *violare*.) The rhetors present a particularly sensational blend of both: the rape of an unmarried girl, sometimes as a wanton act of sexual violence, sometimes as a premeditated strategy of forcing a marriage.

Whereas the *raptus* of the rhetorical schools generally involves rape, followed by a belated appeal for marriage, elsewhere in the literature of the imperial period we find situations corresponding more closely to abduction marriage as it is described by modern ethnographers. One of the *Fabulae* of Phaedrus, the Greek-born freedman of Augustus, describes a spontaneous bride theft. Two suitors, one rich, the other poor but well-born and handsome, had courted the same girl; the wealthier one prevailed. While the wedding procession was already under way, a storm blew up and routed the wedding party. Amidst all the confusion, the rejected lover seized his opportunity and the girl. And although the bride's distraught parents sought their daughter, and the rich bridegroom grieved for his stolen bride, the populace approved the successful abduction as an indication of divine favour towards the abductor.⁵⁶

In the novel *Clitophon and Leucippe* by Achilles Tatius, Callisthenes, a haughty and profligate young man whose proposal of marriage to Leucippe has been rejected, plots and carries out (with the usual gang of companions) a daring raid to obtain the object of his affections by force. His action is inspired by an alleged law of his native Byzantium, which decreed that the penalty for the abduction (*harpagē*) and deflowering of a virgin was marriage. But it turns out to be a case of mistaken identity: having never actually seen his would-be bride but only heard of her extraordinary beauty and desirability, the suitor and his companions had seized the wrong girl. Nevertheless, Callisthenes falls in love with the girl he did take, promises her great wealth if she will marry him, and respects her virginity until she and her father have agreed to a legal union.⁵⁷

The Byzantine 'law' mandating an abductor's marriage with his victim may have been Achilles Tatius' own invention; it resembles the 'laws' of the rhetorical writers discussed above that allowed a *rapta* the choice between marriage with her *raptor* or his death. Possibly there were, in parts of the Empire, laws which forced the abductor of an unmarried woman to marry her, or perhaps Achilles Tatius is recalling a favourite rhetorical exercise of his schooldays, or it may be that the 'laws' cited in literature take their origin not from formal legislation but from the customary way of dealing with cases of abduction marriage in Mediterranean communities in antiquity and today.

Plutarch provides an amusing twist on the theme in his *Amatorius*; a mature widow wishes to marry a younger man, but the youth hesitates between her and his male lover.⁵⁸ Realizing that her beloved's reluctance is due to peer pressure and not to actual distaste for her, the woman engineers his abduction by means of male friends who have been trained by the would-be bride and her female companions. The 'raptus' is seized as he 'decorously' passes her house in a well-choreographed and orderly abduction, which contrasts sharply with the usual messy violence of abductions of females. The youth's male lover is at first extremely angry and ready to organize a rescue posse, but in the end he too joins in the wedding celebrations, and the story ends as happily as that of Callisthenes and his bride. Impartial observers

⁵⁶ Phaedrus, *Fabulae*, Perotti's Appendix 16. Text in B. E. Perry's Loeb edition (1965). I am grateful to J. J. Winkler for the references to abduction marriage in Phaedrus, Achilles Tatius, Plutarch and Polemo.

⁵⁷ Achilles Tatius, *Clitophon and Leucippe* II. 13–18

and VIII. 17–19 (Loeb edition). Most scholars now date Achilles Tatius to the second century A.D.

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Amatorius* 11 (*Moralia*), 754 E–755 D (Loeb edition).

discuss the suitability of this solution to the triangle; one even suggests that the whole episode was a clever stratagem devised by the abducted youth—just as female victims of abduction marriage are generally suspected of complicity or at least willingness.

Polemo, the second-century rhetor and physiognomist, describes two incidents of abduction which he himself had first predicted and then actually witnessed.⁵⁹ In both cases the abducted girl was already betrothed to someone else, and the abduction took place while the wedding ceremony was in progress. At a wedding on Samos armed attackers swept down on the wedding procession as the bride approached the door of the groom's home. The wedding guests, among whom was Polemo himself, fled in all directions; some were even killed by the abductors who escaped with the girl. In the other incident, in Smyrna, the bride had actually entered her new husband's home but went outside again immediately afterwards on the pretext of a call of nature. She was quickly seized and spirited away under cover of night by the abductor's friends. An interesting parallel to this second episode is to be found in an account of an abduction in a modern town of northern Turkey.⁶⁰

Polemo was able to predict these abductions because of his great skill in the art of physiognomy, the reading of others' character and emotions from their facial features. In both incidents he had spotted among the wedding party a young man unconsciously displaying signs of emotional disturbance which revealed his intentions. The brides' faces were equally revealing: the Samian had tears in her eyes and an expression of sadness as she walked in the procession; the Smyrnan girl 'smiled without smiling' and put on a show of false happiness. No doubt, like virtually all marriages in antiquity, the matches had been arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, with little thought for the wishes of the parties involved. By allowing themselves to be 'abducted', these brides had exercised their choice in the only way they could.

IV. ABDUCTION MARRIAGE IN THE LATE EMPIRE

These literary references span the first two centuries of the Empire, and, apart from the rhetorical sources, are by authors born in the Greek East. In the third century some obscure and enigmatic remarks in the legal sources provide the earliest extant references in Roman law to abduction marriage and its consequences. An extract from the third-century jurist Marcian preserved in the *Digest* says:

Whoever has seized ['rapuit', the word used in *CTh* ix. 24. 1] a single woman or a married woman, is punished by the capital penalty, and if her father, in response to pleading, should forgive his own injury [sc. and therefore not bring charges], nevertheless a third party will be able to bring charges against him [the *raptor*] without application of the five-year statute of limitations, since the crime of *raptus* goes beyond the power of the *Lex Julia de adulteriis*.⁶¹

In other words, the *raptor* may very well end up marrying his victim, if he can persuade her father to agree to the marriage; but according to imperial law a charge (under the *Lex Julia de vi publica*) can still be brought against him by someone else, and if convicted he would face the capital penalty. The situation is quite similar to one envisaged in several of the rhetorical exercises: a *raptor* who can within thirty days win the forgiveness of his victim's father, and of his own father, can escape the death

⁵⁹ Polemo, *de physiognomia liber* in *Scriptores Physiognomici Graeci et Latini*, ed. R. Foerster (1893), 286–90. The original Greek does not survive, but the text was preserved in an Arabic translation (I am relying on the Latin translation of the Arabic in Foerster's edition.) For my knowledge of Polemo and his work I am indebted to Maud Gleason.

⁶⁰ cf. Magnarella, 115.

⁶¹ *D.* XLVIII. 6. 52. Marcian is referring to the possi-

bility of an *extraneus* bringing a charge of *stuprum per vim* according to the Augustan law on public violence. Note that whereas the third-century jurist denies the possibility of a five-year statute of limitations (on the analogy of adultery accusations) in cases of *raptus*, *CTh* ix. 24. 3 of 374 established just such a limit because of the possibility of long-lasting marriages being disrupted (see n. 34).

penalty.⁶² Furthermore, the law of Justinian enacted in 533, which superseded all earlier legislation on *raptus*, explicitly forbade any abducted woman to marry her *raptor*. Therefore, however melodramatic and contrived we may find the situation in declamations where the *rapta* and her father are presented with the choice between marriage to the *raptor* or his death, there appears to have been some basis for it in real life, and this continued to be the case even after Constantine.

A rescript of Diocletian and Maximian, preserved in two separate fragments, seems to concern a case where a girl was betrothed to one man and broke it off to become engaged to someone else; her former fiancé abducted her and imprisoned her new *sponsus*. The emperors advise the father of the illegally imprisoned man that he may bring charges against the *raptor* before the governor of his province under the Lex Julia de vi.⁶³ An alternative interpretation would see the *rapta* as attempting to break off her engagement to the petitioner's son in order to marry her abductor; the emperors remind the father that betrothal is not a legally binding contract and therefore she may marry someone else, but he may still seek legal redress for the violent treatment of his son.⁶⁴

The next extant legal reference to *raptus* is found in a constitution of Constantine sent to Octavianus, the *comes Hispaniarum*, about ten years before the promulgation of *CTh* ix. 24. 1. In this law the emperor declares that a man of senatorial rank who 'virginem rapuerit vel fines aliquos invaserit vel in aliqua culpa seu crimine fuerit deprehensus' could not avail himself of *praescriptio fori* and ask to be tried by the urban prefect of Rome, but had to face trial in the province in which he had committed the crime.⁶⁵ The purpose of this rule was to prevent senators or their children who had committed a criminal offence from taking advantage of the privileges traditionally awarded to those of rank. It is interesting that *raptus* and invasion of another's property boundaries are the only crimes mentioned by name, although clearly the same rule would apply to perpetrators of other serious crimes like murder. Octavianus may have had more problems with senatorial offenders in those two cases: abduction of local maidens and illegal seizure of the lands of less powerful citizens were perhaps traditional amusements of high-spirited noblemen in the provinces.

References to abduction marriage in non-legal sources continue into the fourth century, and we get a better glimpse of the reality behind the literary theme. A recently published papyrus records the complaint of a certain Aurelia Attiaena, who had tried in vain to secure a divorce from her reprobate husband and eventually wrote to an imperial official for help. She begins her tale of marital disharmony by declaring that she herself had been the victim of bride theft: 'A certain Paul, coming from the same city, recklessly carried me off by force and compulsion and cohabited with me in marriage'.⁶⁶ The word used to describe her abduction is ἀρπάζω, the Greek equivalent of *rapio*.

Gregory of Nyssa tells us that his mother had decided not to marry out of a Christian desire to preserve her virginity. 'However, since she was an orphan, and flowering in the springtime of her beauty, and the fame of her loveliness had attracted

⁶² *Contr.* II. 3; *Decl.* 349; cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* ix. 2. 90. 1. Both Grodzynski, 703–4 and Desanti, 210–11 have suggested that the statement in *CTh* ix. 24. 1 denying that the *responsio* of the *rapta* will be of use to the *raptor* refers to her choosing the option of marriage. Desanti thinks that until *CTh* ix. 24. 1, Roman law had allowed, sometimes even encouraged, such a 'matrimonio riparatore'. Cf. Bonner (op. cit., n. 54), 90. See below for Justinian's law.

⁶³ This is how I interpreted *CJ* v. 1. 1 and ix. 12. 3, both addressed to Bianor (dated 293) and joined by Krueger.

⁶⁴ For this interpretation, see Desanti, 209, whose article I did not see until after I had written this.

⁶⁵ *CTh* ix. 1. 1, issued December 316 and received in Corduba March 317.

⁶⁶ *P. Oxy.* L. 3581 (fourth or fifth century); translation is that of the editor. On this papyrus, see Roger

Bagnall, 'Church, State and Divorce in Late Roman Egypt' in *Florilegium Columbianum: Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. R. E. Somerville and K.-L. Selig (1987), 41–61.

Other possible cases of *raptus* in the papyri: *PSI* 893 (dated 315) apparently concerns a case of 'reverse abduction' of a girl by her father, who took her away from her husband after two days of marriage (as interpreted by R. Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri* (2nd ed. 1955), 142 n. 41.). *P. Oxy.* 1837 (sixth century) concerns the apparently illegal detainment of a certain Macaria by a man, but is unclear whether this is a case of abduction for the purpose of marriage: see B. Baldwin, 'Crime and Criminals in Greco-Roman Egypt', *Aegyptus* 43 (1963), 256–63. *BGU* 871 (second century) concerns a case of *hybris* and *bia* (= *vis*) and *harpagē*, but the victim appears to be a male *pais*.

many suitors, there was danger that, if she were not joined to someone by choice, she might suffer some unwished-for violence, because some of the suitors, maddened by her beauty, were preparing to carry her off.⁶⁷ This may or may not have been literally true in the case of Gregory's mother (perhaps it is only Gregory's attempt to explain why his mother decided to get married after all), but local Christian leaders considered it a real enough possibility, and we hear of a real incident of abduction marriage in a letter of Gregory's brother, Basil of Caesarea.

Canon eleven of the Council of Ancyra, held in A.D. 314, declares: 'Betrothed girls abducted by others should be returned even after this to their fiancés, even if they have suffered violence at their [sc. their abductors'] hands'.⁶⁸ Nothing is said concerning the fate of the abductor, and apparently no penalty was decreed by the church authorities who met at Ancyra. Although there is nothing in the text to indicate why the council would enact a canon to deal with such a situation, it may well have been prompted by a recent local case or cases of abduction marriage.⁶⁹

Sixty-one years later Basil, bishop of Caesarea, repeated this decision and addressed the problem also of unmarried girls, not betrothed to anyone, who are abducted, and the validity of marriages contracted in this way. His answers are set out in one of several letters, commonly known as the 'canonical epistles', addressed to Amphilochius, the young bishop of Iconium, who had requested guidance on questions of church policy towards certain sins and the degree of penance required to expunge them. Although Basil's 'canons' did not have any secular legal force (nor, indeed, did the canons of the Council of Ancyra), they do indicate what a respected and influential authority of the church in Asia Minor considered the appropriate attitude to take in dealing with threats to the well-being of the family and community.⁷⁰

Canon 22: Regarding men who hold women by abduction [*harpagē*], if they have carried off women who had been betrothed to others, they must not be received before they have separated from them and have placed them in the power of those to whom they were originally betrothed, whether the latter wish to receive them or to give them up. But if anyone takes a girl who is not betrothed, it is necessary to take her away and restore her to her relatives, and commit her to their discretion, whether they are parents or brothers, or whoever have authority over the maiden: and if they choose to surrender her to him, the union shall be valid, but if they refuse, violence is not to be employed. However, he who holds a wife by secret or somewhat violent seduction [*diaphthora*] must acknowledge the punishment for fornication [*porneia*] ...

Canon 30: Regarding abductors [*harpazontes*], we have no ancient canon [referring to the fact that the Council of Ancyra only mentions the fate of the abducted girl], but we have formed our own judgement—that for three years both the abductors themselves and those who aid them in the abduction should remain outside the prayers. But whatever does not take place through violence is not liable to punishment, whenever neither seduction nor robbery precedes the deed. The widow, moreover, is free and it is in her power to follow. Accordingly we should pay no heed to pretences.

The penalties Basil proposed are strictly ecclesiastical and concern the amount of public penance each offence requires. Undergoing penance according to church rules would not, of course, excuse an offender from criminal penalties such as those instituted by Constantine. But it is remarkable here that Basil advocates a solution diametrically opposed to that proposed by Constantine for the same problem. *De facto* marriages brought about by rape or abduction are discouraged, and the abductor is penalized, as are young people who elope or engage in pre-marital sexual activity.

⁶⁷ Translated by V. W. Callahan in *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works* (1967) 164. For the Greek text see P. Maraval's edition (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 1971), at 144–4, with his note.

⁶⁸ For the canons of Council of Ancyra, see *Histoire des Conciles d'après les documents originaux*, by C. J. Hefele, revised H. Leclercq (1909), I, 1, 313.

⁶⁹ Canon 25 of the same council was clearly

prompted by a specific incident, also involving pre-marital sex and betrothal.

⁷⁰ The translation given here is that of Roy J. Deferrari in his Loeb edition, III, 113–37 *passim*. An introduction to and explanation of the 'canonical epistles' is given by Deferrari, x–xvi. All canons mentioned here are from Ep. 199. On Basil's penitential system, Deferrari, xii–xv.

But if, after the fact, the parents and the girl agree to a marriage, these unions are to be considered perfectly valid in the eyes of the church. This surprisingly lenient attitude towards pre-marital sex among young people has parallels in other Christian sources.⁷¹ On the other hand, adultery or sexual lapses by men and women consecrated to divine service are treated much more harshly.⁷²

The case is somewhat different if the girl was previously betrothed to someone else; there both Basil and the Council of Ancyra believe that the properly affianced suitor has first claim on her, and so she must be returned to him. Basil, however, admits the possibility that the fiancé might not want his betrothed once her virginal purity has been called into question; this was undoubtedly quite often the case, as the abductors well knew. Basil also insists that the parents must agree to the *de facto* marriage before the church can sanction it; no doubt they usually did, and the finale to the abduction would perhaps be that described in an ethnographer's account of bride theft in a modern Greek community: '... they are taken immediately to the church and the service is celebrated'.⁷³

It is interesting that Basil, here and in other canons, considers the abduction or seduction of a widow in a different light; unlike the young unmarried girl whose fate is to be decided by the wishes of her fiancé or her parents, the widow's sexuality is apparently in her own control. The 'pretences' to which Basil gives little heed are presumably those of widows who run away with their lovers and then claim to have been abducted—since a woman's reputation would be more damaged if she were willingly seduced rather than taken against her will.⁷⁴

However, we do find a much sterner approach to abduction marriage in another letter of Basil, written at about the same time as the 'canons' to Amphilochius. The addressee of this letter is unknown, but he appears from the context to have been a local church leader in a community in which an actual incident of abduction had recently occurred. Basil is extremely angry about the abduction, as much by the complacency with which it has been received as by the act itself. He declares:

I am greatly grieved that I do not find you either indignant over deeds which are forbidden or able to understand that this abduction [*harpagē*] which is going on is an unlawful outrage and a tyranny against life itself and the existence of man, and an insult to free men. For I know that if you all had such an opinion, nothing would have prevented this wicked custom from being driven long ago out of our country. Therefore assume in the present instance the zeal of a Christian, and be moved in a manner worthy of the injustice. And as for the child [*païs*], wherever you find her, take her by all force and restore her to her parents; and as for the man, debar him from the prayers, and declare him excommunicated; and as for those who accompanied the man, according to the canon already published by us [probably canon 30, cited above], debar them with their whole household from the prayers for a period of three years. And as for the village that received her who was abducted [*harpagēisan*], and kept her, or even fought to keep her, put it also with all its people outside the prayers; that all may learn, considering the ravager as a common foe like a snake or any other wild beast, to pursue him accordingly and to champion those who are wronged.⁷⁵

The letter is extremely revealing. A girl has been abducted and spirited away to a village that not only kept the abductor's secret, but actually seems to have fought to prevent her rescue. Basil's attitude here is closer to Constantine's than that shown in the canons, except that he does not demand any punishment for the girl or her parents, and that of course the penalties are ecclesiastical rather than civil. Excommunication is, however, as serious a penalty as a bishop can prescribe.

Perhaps the circumstances of this particular incident have caused Basil to take a

⁷¹ E.g. canon 14 of Council of Elvira (Baetica, early fourth century); cf. also Basil's canons 25 and 26.

⁷² Both the Council of Elvira (canon 13) and Basil (canon 18) have a quite different policy when the girl is a consecrated virgin; there adultery (to Christ) is at issue, and the penalty is much harsher. Imperial law also considers the case of consecrated virgins separ-

ately: see below.

⁷³ Campbell, 130.

⁷⁴ On the disguising of elopement as abduction, see n. 14. Sexual autonomy of widows: cf. Basil's canons 41 and 42.

⁷⁵ Epistle 270, trans. Deferrari, iv. 140–3 (with my correction of his mistranslation of *harpagē* as 'rape').

harder line than the policy set forth in the canons concerning hypothetical abductions. The 'bride' is here called a *pais*, a child, whereas in the canons the abducted girl is a *korē* or (when referred to as a wife) a *gunē*. Also, it seems clear that the girl's parents want her back and are not willing to agree to a marriage. In this case it may be that a very young girl, perhaps below the legal age for marriage (twelve), was kidnapped by a grown man, who was aided and abetted not only by the usual gang of friends but also by the complicity of an entire village (presumably his home village). Perhaps the abductor was a favourite among the villagers, or even a local notable taking advantage of his higher status and power; one recalls Constantine's directive to Count Octavianus which refused the right of *praescriptio fori* to *raptores* of senatorial rank. Also, it appears from the present tense of the participle, 'the abduction which is going on', that the abductor and his victim are still at large, and that the parents are still searching.

The 'fighting' Basil refers to may have been against the males of the girl's family and their slaves and freedmen who had come to rescue her. In modern Greece, bride theft is a dangerous undertaking and can result in the death of the abductor, which then leads to a vengeance killing by the abductor's brother, and so on into a long-term family feud.⁷⁶ It is at that point, and not with the abduction itself (which may be the most feasible resolution of tension when a suitor's honour has been insulted), that the affair becomes a threat to public order. The combination of the unusually shocking circumstances of this abduction (the girl's youth, the fact that her parents, who desperately want her back, have still not recovered her) and the violence which ensued, compounded by the village's complacency and active support of the abductor, has led Basil to abandon his usually more tolerant attitude toward abduction. However, despite his anger Basil makes no mention of the criminal penalties for abduction which imperial legislation prescribed, though it is quite probable that, as a highly educated bishop (he had studied rhetoric with Libanius at Athens) with a great deal of responsibility and authority, he was aware of the law.⁷⁷ Apparently he preferred to deal with the situation by means of ecclesiastical sanctions and not to expose all involved (including the victim and her parents) to the secular penalties.

The evidence from the Council of Ancyra and the canonical epistles of Basil does not support the view that Constantine's harsh law against abduction marriage, which punishes not only the *raptor* but the abducted girl and often her parents also, was enacted as a result of Constantine's conversion to Christianity and his adoption of Christian ideals of sexual purity.⁷⁸ On the contrary, the tolerance of marriages formed by abduction indicated by the canons of Ancyra and of Basil suggests strongly that Constantine's law on the abduction of virgins and the draconian penalties he set down for all involved are not consonant with contemporary Christian thinking. Even when Basil of Caesarea has been appalled and angered by a particularly shocking incident, he does not recommend handing the offenders over to the authority of the law (the whole village could have been punished for complicity), and he certainly does not suggest that the girl or her parents are in any way responsible for what happened.

For although Christians had always put a great deal of emphasis on sexual chastity and admired men and women who maintained their virginity throughout their life, they also freely recognized that not everyone could live up to these ideals; as we have seen, the practical response of local church authorities to a girl's loss of virginity before marriage was quite different from Constantine's. In fact, by allowing, and sometimes even insisting on, the marriage of the girl to the man who had violated

⁷⁶ Family feuds and vengeance killing: Herzfeld, 29; Campbell, 200–3. See Lockwood, 259–60 for a case with the same elements.

⁷⁷ According to a law of Theodosius I (*CTh* xi. 39. 8, 381), bishops could not be forced to testify in court, so (assuming that Epistle 270 post-dates 381, which is not certain) Basil would not have put himself in legal jeopardy by avoiding the imperial courts. For the same reluctance to bring before secular law Christians who have committed sex crimes, cf. canon 34 (adulteresses).

⁷⁸ This interpretation goes back to Godefroy (Gothofredus), and is adopted by Desanti (217); T. D. Barnes (*op. cit.*, n. 3), 220; and B. Biondi, *Il diritto romano-cristiano* (1952–4), III, 484. Dupont (*op. cit.*, n. 33) says it is possible that the Church's concern with *raptus* (as seen in canon 11 of Ancyra) drew Constantine's attention to the problem, but that the Emperor's treatment of *raptus* is totally different from that of the Church council. Grodzynski, 710–11, leaves the question of Christian influence open.

her, they were offering a solution directly opposed to Constantine's law. And although both Basil and those who met at the Council of Ancyra looked very unfavourably on the abductor, they apparently assumed that the girl herself was a passive victim, and did not really consider her wishes in the matter at all—only those of her parents, and if she was already betrothed, of her fiancé. These Christian leaders were less critical of the victim of an abduction than most ancient and modern observers, who generally impute some measure of responsibility to the abducted woman. Constantine, too, assumed more active participation on the part of the *rapta*—and punished her for it.

Probably Christians preferred to see a situation like abduction marriage handled by the Church rather than by the state. If they wanted any sort of official action taken, they would do better to go to their local bishop, who would of course impose penance on the abductor, but would probably also sanction the marriage—and would not, apparently, alert the authorities.

This survey has shown that the practice of marriage by abduction has a long history in antiquity—in myth, literature and clearly also in real life. Popular attitudes toward it were essentially the same as they are in Mediterranean societies today where bride theft still occurs: the community as a whole often supports the abductor, whose prestige and masculinity are enhanced by a successful abduction; as long as the couple finally marries and there have been no major acts of violence, the situation has probably turned out for the best. There is often a feeling that the abducted girl is to a certain extent responsible for her own abduction, and in some cases, when elopement is disguised as abduction, this is true. A girl who has been the victim of abduction will find that her reputation has suffered and she will have great difficulty in marrying anyone except her abductor, so the *raptus* usually ends in marriage—which indeed was the *raptor's* intention. But although the *rapta* is not considered blameless, she is much less culpable if she was taken by force than if she has been seduced or run away of her own accord. And so a staged abduction can serve as an alternative marriage strategy in which the bride and groom themselves take the initiative and marry the partner of their choice; otherwise they would have to accept the spouse selected for them by their parents. And even in cases where the *rapta* was unwilling or unaware of the abduction beforehand, the *raptor* is still taking the bride of his choice, probably in defiance of parental wishes.

The attitude of the authorities is less favourable than that of the general public, and of course the abducted girl's family is usually enraged at the theft of their daughter. However, the families of both the *rapta* and *raptor* generally come round and accept the union, and local church authorities, though displeased at this irregular and anomic way of making a marriage, feel that as long as all parties are satisfied with the union in the end, no great harm has been done. However, if the victim was already betrothed to someone else before her abduction, or if her family is not agreeable to a marriage, or if she had dedicated herself to holy virginity, the official Christian attitude is much more severe.

In the face of such a long-established custom, which was regarded with equanimity by most and tolerated even by those who did not approve, it would not be surprising if the harsh and sweeping legislation against *raptus* enacted by Constantine failed to eradicate abduction marriage. And from what little evidence we have, that appears to have been the case.

The two other fourth-century constitutions preserved under the title *de raptu virginum vel viduarum* in the Theodosian Code (*CTh* ix. 24. 2 of 349 and ix. 24. 3 of 374) have already been discussed.⁷⁹ Both of these later measures moderate the severity of Constantine's law by mitigating the fierceness of the penalties and refusing the right of prosecution if five years have elapsed since the abduction took place. From *CTh* ix. 24. 2 it appears that because of the atrocity of the punishments set forth in

⁷⁹ Part II above. The title is that of the fifth-century compilers of the *CTh*.

Constantine's law, citizens were reluctant to bring charges of *raptus* before the authorities, and imperial judges to convict those brought before them. Although we should not assume that harsh and inhumane penalties were never put into effect but were intended only as a deterrent,⁸⁰ in individual cases even the most hard-nosed advocate of law enforcement might hesitate to send two young lovers who had eloped to the stake or the arena or to pour molten lead down the throat of an aged nurse.

In fact, according to Eusebius, even Constantine himself had a weak spot when it came to employing the death penalty, and his provincial governors were so notoriously 'soft on crime' that he can claim that they provoked criticism from the emperor's detractors.⁸¹ Eusebius is speaking in general and eulogistic terms of Constantine's 'mild' disposition and does not refer to any particular examples; but Ammianus Marcellinus reports that Constantine's nephew, the Emperor Julian, displayed similar clemency in a case of *raptus*, which the victim's parents had asked him to judge. Julian condemned the perpetrator to exile (*relegatio*), and when the girl's parents complained that his failure to apply the death penalty was an insult to their honour, he replied that it was fitting for imperial clemency to override the laws.⁸²

Despite the more lenient attitude of individual emperors or other judges, by the reign of Constantius *raptus* had become, in the eyes of the imperial administration, one of the most serious criminal offences, of the same order of depravity as murder, adultery, treason, and sorcery—crimes so heinous that there could be no right of appeal or pardon for those convicted of them.⁸³ Also under Constantius there begins a series of laws directed against a kind of abduction particularly repugnant to Christian sensibilities: the *raptus* of women, either virgins or widows, who had dedicated themselves to God. Constantius' law, enacted in 354, expressly warned the *raptor* that his victim's consent after the fact would be of no use to him.⁸⁴

Ten years later, the Emperor Jovian, Julian's short-lived successor, proclaimed that not only the *raptus* of a *sacrata* but even 'attemptare matrimonii iungendi causa' would be punished with a capital sentence. According to the fifth-century ecclesiastical historian Sozomen, Jovian's legislation was a reaction to official laxity during Julian's reign in the prosecution of such cases.⁸⁵ Prohibition of the abduction of consecrated virgins was repeated in 420 by Honorius and in 458 by Majorian.⁸⁶ Interestingly, in 451 the Council of Chalcedon condemned *clerics* who had abducted women, even if for the purpose of marriage.⁸⁷

Finally, in 533 the Emperor Justinian abolished all earlier laws on *raptus* in order to replace them with a new, comprehensive law.⁸⁸ This was directed against all the possible types of *raptus*: the abduction of virgins and widows, secular and consecrated, of women of free birth, freedwomen, and slaves, of those who were already engaged and those who were not, and even of married women (although in this last case the *raptor* would be guilty of adultery also). Furthermore, Justinian's law explicitly included the man who 'had dared to seize his own fiancée [*sponsa*] by force'. This seems to refer to the possibility of a man whose marriage has been put off longer than he likes, perhaps by the decision of his parents or of his fiancée's parents, who anticipates the nuptials by taking matters into his own hands.

Raptores who were caught at the scene of their crimes by the male relatives or guardian of the woman (or, in the case of freedwomen or slaves, their patron or

⁸⁰ Grodzynski, 709–10; cf. R. MacMullen, 'Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire', *Chiron* 16 (1986), 147–66.

⁸¹ Eusebius. *VC* iv. 31.

⁸² Amm. Marc. xvi. 5. 12. Grodzynski, 713 points out that here the *raptus*'s family clearly did press charges, and there is no mention of any penalty for the girl. Presumably Julian declined to punish her at all.

⁸³ *CTh* xi. 36. 7 (344): 'quorum appellationes non recipiantur', *CTh* ix. 38. 3 (369); ix. 38. 4 (368); ix. 38. 6 (381); ix. 38. 7 (384); ix. 38. 8 (385): 'de indulgentiis criminum'; cf. *CTh* ix. 2. 5 (409).

In Constantine's decree of amnesty (*CTh* ix. 38. 1, 322), there is no mention of *raptus*; likewise in xi. 36. 1 (314), nothing is said regarding *raptores*—but *CTh* ix.

24. 1 explicitly denies them the right of appeal.

⁸⁴ *CTh* ix. 25. 1 (354), addressed to the urban prefect Orfitus.

⁸⁵ *CTh* ix. 25. 2 (364); Sozomen, *HE* vi. 3.

⁸⁶ Sirmondian Constitution 10 (420), of which *CTh* ix. 25. 3 is an excerpt; Novels of Majorian 6. 4 (458).

⁸⁷ According to canon 27 of the Council of Chalcedon, laymen who abduct women are to be anathematized; clerics are to be deposed.

⁸⁸ Justinian's law is found at *CJ* i. 3. 53 (*raptus* of consecrated women) and *CJ* ix. 13. 1 (*raptus* of all other women). *CJ* v. 17. 11, and perhaps also *CJ* vii. 24. 1 and xi. 48. 24 are from the same law, though they do not directly concern *raptus*.

master) were to be killed, apparently immediately without trial,⁸⁹ but those who managed to escape were to be hunted 'per diversas nostri orbis regiones' by imperial officials at every level of government. When the fugitives were finally arrested, they were to have a proper trial (without the privilege of *praescriptio fori*) and then be executed. 'And if they should wish to appeal, we give no licence for this, according to the prescription of the ancient Constantinian law'. The freeborn victim of a *raptor* also receives all his property, and she may use it to make up all or part of her dowry if she marries anyone except the *raptor*, or, if she prefers not to marry but 'remanere in sua pudicitia', she is to have full control over the confiscated goods. The *raptor* of a freedwoman or slave, on the other hand, may keep his property (or rather, his heirs may, since he will have been executed). In the cases of dedicated virgins or widows, the *raptor's* property goes to the monastic institution at which they reside.

One paragraph of Justinian's law is particularly interesting, for it recalls the situation posed in the rhetorical writers of the early Empire:

Nor shall the *rapta* ... have the opportunity to seek her *raptor* as a husband for herself, but her parents may join her in legitimate marriage with anyone they wish, with the exception of the *raptor*, since in no way at any time is licence given by our Serenity to consent to those in our republic who seek to contract a marriage for themselves by means of a hostile custom. For it is necessary that whoever would wish to marry a wife, whether freeborn or freed, ask her parents or others whom it is proper [sc. her guardian if she is an orphan, her patron if she is a *liberta*] according to our laws and the ancient custom and that there be legitimate marriage in accordance with their wish.⁹⁰

Accomplices who went with the *raptor* 'in the invasion itself' are also to be executed and their property confiscated. And those who did not take part in the actual abduction but who aided and abetted the *raptor* in any way are to undergo the capital penalty, regardless of their sex or rank, and regardless of whether the abducted woman was willing or not:

For if the abductors restrain themselves from a deed of this kind from fear of the atrocity of the penalty, no opportunity for sinning will be left to any woman, whether willing or unwilling, because a woman is persuaded to want this very thing by the ambushes of a very wicked man who meditates plunder. For indeed unless he has solicited her, unless he has surrounded her with odious stratagems, he does not make her want to surrender herself to so great a disgrace.⁹¹

Here we come to the crux of the matter. In Justinian's eyes, the most deplorable aspect of *raptus* is not the possibility of violence, even rape, but that the woman may be won over by the flattery and promises of her abductor and *willingly* 'surrender herself to disgrace'. The idea that corruption of a woman's thoughts and sense of shame is far worse than physical violation of her body is not due to new Christian ideals of the purity of the soul, but was an intrinsic part of the traditional Graeco-Roman mentality, and can be traced at least as far back as the fifth century B.C.⁹² We recall the derogatory reference in *CTh* IX. 24. 1 to woman's 'fault of frivolity and the fickleness of her sex and judgement', and indeed the next sentences in Justinian's law, which state the penalties for parents who arranged their daughter's abduction and for slaves who were involved, are taken directly from Constantine's edict. But according to Justinian, the woman who allowed herself to be 'solicited and surrounded with odious stratagems' is not to be penalized, except in that she is not allowed to marry her seducer. Not only is this treatment of the *rapta* more humane; it may also have served as a greater deterrent to abduction marriage than Constantine's harsh

⁸⁹ *CJ* IX. 13. 1. 1. The law's wording suggests that lynching of the *raptor* by the woman's family or protectors was allowed, if they caught him in the act. So Grodzynski, 725 also understands it.

⁹⁰ *CJ* IX. 13. 1. 2.

⁹¹ *CJ* IX. 13. 1. 3b.

⁹² The *locus classicus* is Lysias 1 (*On the Murder of Eratosthenes*).

penalties.⁹³ For parents would be more willing to denounce (and to kill) an abductor and, provided with a dowry greatly enlarged by the confiscated property of the *raptor*, the *rapta* might even be able to find another husband.

Justinian's law is thus more thorough and balanced than that of Constantine, and possibly also more effective. In any case, abduction continued to be the subject of legislation in the Middle Ages, both in the Byzantine Empire and in the western Germanic law codes which made use of the *Theodosian Code* and fifth-century imperial *Novellae*. And the Byzantine epic hero Digenes Akritas was said to be the product of an abduction marriage and carried on the family tradition when he stole his own bride.⁹⁴

V. ABDUCTION AND BETROTHAL IN CONSTANTINE'S LEGISLATION

Marriage by abduction, as we have seen, functions as an alternative to, and a repudiation of, the arranged marriage preceded by a formal agreement. Betrothal is a social and sometimes also a political pact which creates and cements alliances between families. Abduction marriage is a socially disruptive force which ignores the interests of the family as a whole, and substitutes the selfish desires of reckless young men and women for the careful arrangements of their elders.

In antiquity, as in those Mediterranean societies where abduction marriage still occurs today, betrothal was traditionally an agreement between the parents (generally the fathers, though mothers were often consulted also) of the prospective bride and groom. Although the consent of the couple involved was, at least in theory, a legal requisite, and many parents did take their children's views into account when deciding upon their future marriage partners, the choice of spouse and the negotiations involved in making a betrothal pact were almost always in the parents' hands.⁹⁵ Thus by bypassing the betrothal stage and effecting a *de facto* marriage without any kind of preliminaries and without their parents' permission, the couple who married by abduction were flouting the authority of the Roman *paterfamilias* and overturning the traditional family hierarchy.⁹⁶

In view of the relationship between betrothal and abduction as alternative marriage strategies, it is noteworthy that several other laws of Constantine deal with betrothal agreements and indicate that the emperor considered betrothal a social contract creating bonds that were not to be broken lightly. In a law of 319, he declared that 'the opinion of the ancient laws, which decreed that gifts made to a fiancée were valid even when marriage does not follow, is displeasing' and stated that henceforth the party responsible for breaking a betrothal was to forfeit all gifts, both those given by him (or her, though, according to the law, pre-nuptial gifts from *sponsa* to *sponsus* were rare) to the other, and those received from the other. No inquiries were to be made as to the reason for breaking the engagement, nor were any objections regarding the family background or moral behaviour of one party to be considered valid cause for reneging on a betrothal agreement, 'since all these things ought to be foreseen before the betrothal is contracted'.⁹⁷ This was revised in 336 by a constitution which

⁹³ Grodzynski, 724. It may be that *raptae* were rarely punished, even under Constantine's law. Merêa (art. cit., n. 25) thinks that judges always preferred the less severe penalty of disinheritance, even for willing *raptae*. The nurse's gruesome punishment is also absent from Justinian's law.

⁹⁴ Abduction marriage was also a Germanic custom in early medieval Europe: D. Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (1985), 29–55 *passim*; G. Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* (1981, Eng. 1983), esp. 32–53. See also J. Brundage, 'Rape and Seduction in the Medieval Canon Law' in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. V. L. Bullough and J. Brundage (1982), 141–8. For Byzantine law: J. Beaucamp, 'La situation juridique de la femme à Byzance' in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 20 (1977), 145–76, at 168–9. For Digenes Akritas, see the text and trans. of J. Mavrog-

dato (1956), esp. books 1 and 4.

⁹⁵ At least in the case of first marriage, when daughters and often sons would be under twenty-five and therefore, in the eyes of late Roman law, still minors.

⁹⁶ Merêa (op. cit., n. 25), 205, believes that the alleged weakening of *patria potestas* in late antiquity had led to children arranging their own marriages, thereby precipitating new legal restrictions. Cf. Dupont (op. cit., n. 33), 47. In fact, there are several later laws which do reassert the authority of the family elders over the marriages of women under twenty-five: *CTh* III. 7. 1 (371); *CJ* v. 4. 20 (409); *CTh* III. 5. 12 (422).

⁹⁷ *CTh* III. 5. 2 (319), addressed to the urban prefect of Rome. If one of the couples dies before the marriage, any gifts exchanged reverted to the giver or his/her immediate heirs (this was modified by *CTh* III. 5. 6).

laid down a detailed set of rules regarding the disposition of betrothal gifts when one partner died before the marriage took place.⁹⁸

Another law of Constantine states bluntly that a girl who has been betrothed to a soldier is not to marry anyone else—if she does, her father or guardian or the relative responsible for her marriage is to be relegated to an island on a charge of *perfidia*. However, if the betrothal has lasted for more than two years and the soldier still has not married his fiancée, she is free to marry someone else.⁹⁹ It is worth noting that in this law the girl's father or guardian is sentenced to relegation (a somewhat less severe penalty than the *deportatio* imposed on parents who agree to the marriage of their daughter with her abductor), but the girl herself is not penalized for the broken betrothal. Clearly, in a proper betrothal pact, the responsibility lies with the person who has legal authority (though not necessarily *potestas*) over the *sponsa*, and who is assumed to have taken the initiative in both contracting and dissolving the betrothal. But a girl who has been abducted, even against her will, is considered responsible for having broken the rules, since she could have kept herself at home until she could be properly married through the arrangements of her parents or guardian.

Constantine's legislation on betrothal introduced a real innovation into Roman law, by making betrothal a binding contract subject to legal sanctions if broken. Not since the early Republic had *sponsalia* been legally actionable.¹⁰⁰ These laws are the first of a number of imperial constitutions on betrothal and pre-nuptial gifts spanning the next two centuries, which have been attributed to Christian influence. But although it is possible that Constantine's views on the importance of the betrothal bond reflect Christian ideology, evidence for specifically Christian attitudes toward betrothal in Constantine's time or earlier is very limited. Apart from a few remarks in Tertullian which indicate that Christians considered betrothal pacts serious contracts, the only ante-Nicene Christian sources which discuss betrothal are the canons of local church councils. The most informative is Canon 54 of the Council of Elvira, held in central Spain during the first decade of the fourth century:

Parents who break their children's betrothals must abstain from communion for three years; if however, the *sponsus* or the *sponsa* has been caught in a serious crime, the parents will be excused; if sin has been found in both [*sponsus* and *sponsa*] at the same time and they have polluted themselves [presumably by pre-marital sex], the first sentence stands.¹⁰¹

Clearly, the Spanish church authorities who met at Elvira strongly disapproved of broken betrothals, but whether this attitude was unique to Christians is less certain. What we know of betrothal agreements among Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries indicates that they followed closely, in form and content, the precedents of pre-Christian Roman society.¹⁰² And that late antique Christians were not alone in considering the betrothal pact a solemn and binding agreement is shown by the surprisingly strong tone with which Symmachus, that staunch upholder of Roman pagan tradition, endeavoured to dissuade a senatorial acquaintance from breaking off a match.¹⁰³ There is little evidence for Roman attitudes toward betrothal outside the upper classes, but comparison with other traditional Mediterranean societies suggests that they also took betrothal agreements seriously.¹⁰⁴

The law on *raptus* also demonstrates the importance placed by Constantine on

⁹⁸ CTh III. 5. 6 (336), addressed to the Vicar of Spain.

⁹⁹ CTh III. 5. 4 and III. 5. 5, addressed to Pacatianus, praetorian prefect, in 332.

¹⁰⁰ cf. P. E. C. Corbett, *The Roman Law of Marriage* (1930), 8–16; A. Watson, *The Law of Persons in the Later Roman Republic* (1967), 11–18.

¹⁰¹ Text in Hefele-Leclercq (op. cit., n. 68), 251. Canons 11 and 25 of the Council of Ancyra also involve betrothal: see above, n. 68–9.

¹⁰² For betrothal in late antique Christian society, see B. Shaw, 'The Family in Late Antiquity: the Experience of Augustine', *Past and Present* 115 (1987), 3–51, esp. 34–9; L. Anné, *Les rites des fiançailles et la donation*

pour cause de mariage sous le Bas-Empire (1941).

¹⁰³ Sym. Ep. 9. 43 (I am grateful to John Matthews for this reference). On betrothal among the Roman upper classes before Constantine: S. Treggiari, 'Digna Condicio', *Échos du Monde classique* 28 (1984), 419–51.

¹⁰⁴ See Part 1. In classical Athens, betrothal (*engyē*) was a prerequisite for legitimate marriage (except in the case of *epiklēroi*), and was customary in other Greek states: Lacey (op. cit., n. 44), 105–6 and 225. It has often been suggested that late Roman betrothal laws were strongly influenced by Greek and Near Eastern customs, but this is disputed by Anné (n. 102).

the betrothal pact, for in its opening sentence it describes the *raptor* as 'nihil cum parentibus ante depectus'. And indeed it is not surprising that a legislator who wishes to regulate engagement pacts and to reinforce the bonds of betrothal by legal sanctions will also condemn marriage by abduction, the opposite of betrothal. Other legislation of Constantine indicates that he thought the preservation of a woman's *pudor* was very important and had little confidence in the ability of women to exercise self-control.¹⁰⁵ Several other laws, particularly from the early years of Constantine's reign, reflect attempts to crack down on incidents of local violence arising from private disputes, especially over property.¹⁰⁶ And in its concern for maintenance of the social order, even to the detriment of the individual families involved, *CTh* ix. 24. 1 can also be compared with a number of other Constantinian laws which ban and penalize harshly unions between those of disparate social status.¹⁰⁷

VI. CONCLUSION

It is rarely possible, in the absence of evidence outside the legal sources, to determine the circumstances or events which led to the promulgation of the constitutions preserved in the *Theodosian Code*. The *Code* is made up of excerpts from the original laws, and the fifth-century compilers generally omitted references to specific incidents and individuals and also deleted much of the rhetoric of the original legislation, which was felt to be superfluous. Because of this abridgement, clear statements of the lawmakers' intentions in promulgating their edicts have mostly been omitted.¹⁰⁸ However, fourth- and fifth-century laws preserved intact outside the *Code* often mention the people or events that prompted them.¹⁰⁹ The evidence of these laws suggests that Constantine's edict on *raptus* was precipitated by a specific incident or incidents, perhaps a particularly scandalous case of abduction, which had come to the attention of the imperial consistory.

Before Constantine's reign such a situation, if it had ever come to the emperor's attention, would have been handled via private rescript: an individual, perhaps the father of the abducted girl, would have written to the emperor for help in resolving the situation. The emperor's reply would have been made to that individual, based on the facts of the case presented to him. Imperial rescripts were publicly posted and could create precedents to be used in later legal cases, but they were not intended as general laws with immediate application to all inhabitants of the Empire, nor did they prescribe penalties, nor did the imperial administration take steps to see that a rescript's ruling was enforced or obeyed—though rescripts often advise the recipient to see his local governor for redress. A rescript of Diocletian and Maximian which appears to refer to a case of abduction and wrongful imprisonment follows exactly that format.¹¹⁰

Most of the legislation of emperors before Constantine that has been preserved in the *Codex Justinianus* is of this type. In the fourth century, however, *leges generales*, universally applicable and usually in the form of edicts, became the vehicle for almost all the emperor's official rulings. The promulgation of these laws was the responsibility of the *quaestor sacri palatii*, whose office was created by Constantine.¹¹¹ This change in the format and scope of imperial constitutions seems to have occurred during the reign of Diocletian, and has been linked with that

¹⁰⁵ See n. 22 above.

¹⁰⁶ cf. *CTh* ix. 1. 1 (n. 65 above); also *CTh* ix. 10. 1 (317?) and 2 (318). See J. Coroï, *La violence en droit criminel romain* (1915), 304–33, esp. 308–21. There is plenty of evidence in the papyri for such local violence: cf. Baldwin (art. cit. n. 66), 262.

¹⁰⁷ e.g., *CTh* ix. 9. 1 (326 or 329); *CTh* iv. 6. 2 and 3 (336); cf. *CTh* xii. 1. 6.

¹⁰⁸ On the compilation of the *CTh*, see, most recently, Tony Honoré. 'The Making of the Theodosian Code', *ZSS.RA* 103 (1986), 133–222.

¹⁰⁹ e.g., Sirmondian Const. 10 (420), prompted by a

priest's *suggestio*: 9 November of Majorian (459), prompted by a report of the governor of Suburbicarian Tuscany; 1 November of Anthemius (468), prompted by the petition of a private citizen named Julia; many other examples in the post-*CTh* imperial *novellae*.

¹¹⁰ See nn. 63–4 above.

¹¹¹ Quaestor: see Honoré (op. cit. n. 108), 139–41; and J. Harries, 'The Roman Imperial Quaestor from Constantine to Theodosius II', *JRS* 78 (1988), 148–72. I am indebted to Dr Harries for allowing me to see her article before publication and for her advice concerning this section.

emperor's reorganization of the Empire and his attempts to streamline the imperial administration.¹¹²

Therefore, even though Constantine's ruling on *raptus* may have been inspired by a particular incident or incidents, it was given in the form of an edict, and addressed 'to the people'. Its provisions were applicable to all cases of abduction in the future, and it became the basis for a series of general laws on the same subject over the next two centuries. There is no need to assume that there was an increase in the frequency of abduction in the early fourth century to explain the enactment of a law against the practice just at this time.¹¹³

An important consequence of this increase in general legislation in the fourth century is that matters which in the earlier Empire would not have been considered worthy subjects for an imperial edict now were. This is surely the case with Constantine's edict against *raptus*. Judging from the evidence of ancient literature and from modern accounts of bride theft, marriage by abduction would have been much more likely to occur not among those in large urban areas such as Rome, or among the upper classes, but rather in more remote rural communities—towns and villages of the Mediterranean which were less accessible to, and less concerned about, upper-class Roman legal and social control. These are not the people for whom the classical law of the jurists or the imperial edicts of the Principate were written. Certainly, emperors from Augustus on concerned themselves with the marriages and sexual behaviour of the upper classes, particularly in Rome and Italy; thus there were laws encouraging marriage and child-bearing and punishing adultery. But clearly Augustus never saw the need for a *Lex Julia de raptu*—cases of abduction which involved rape or other violence would come under the *Lex Julia de vi*, and any other incidents of *raptus* would have been considered a private and probably a rather vulgar matter, with no relevance to the well-being of the Empire.

In late antiquity, on the other hand, such customs and the people who practised them *were* considered suitable material for imperial edicts, and this is of considerable interest for our understanding of late Roman law and what it can tell us. Since the Emperor Caracalla's universal grant of the Roman citizenship in 212, the tenets of Roman law had been applicable (though not necessarily applied) to all free inhabitants of the Empire. Constantine's law reflects this widening of the scope of imperial legislation.¹¹⁴ Imperial interest in the *mores* and morals of those outside the urban upper classes of the Roman west is found already in one of the few pre-Constantinian edicts preserved in the legal sources: Diocletian's long and virulent edict against the practice of close-kin marriage.¹¹⁵ This new imperial concern may owe something to the often rather humble provincial origins of late third- and fourth-century emperors, and to the increasing social mobility of the late Empire, when, for a variety of reasons, the traditional social boundaries of Graeco-Roman society were in flux and individuals of unexceptional or even ignoble origins were able to rise to prominence. Constantine himself seems to have encouraged this mobility by his policy of promoting his supporters to positions of high rank, even those of rather lowly background.¹¹⁶ Such men would have brought the customs and attitudes of their region and social class with them, customs which might well not be those of the old aristocracy.¹¹⁷

Lastly, we should also consider the role of rhetoric in the framing of Constantine's laws. The similarity of parts of *CTh* ix. 24. 1 to passages in the *Controversiae* has already been noted, and in fact the edict on *raptus* is not the only late Roman law

¹¹² This is the thesis of T. Honoré, *Emperors and Lawyers* (1981).

¹¹³ As do Dupont (op. cit., n. 33), 49; and Desanti, 204.

¹¹⁴ Of course the rescripts of third-century emperors were also concerned with acquainting provincials and common people with Roman law, but they were issued as responses to private individuals, not as general edicts. See F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977), 242–72 and 537–49.

¹¹⁵ Preserved in full in the *Mosaïcarum et Romanarum*

Legum Collatio iv. 1, *FIRA*² II, pp. 558–60; given at Damascus in 295.

¹¹⁶ Men like Ablabius, Constantine's praetorian prefect and right-hand man (cf. Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 463); and Optatus, *cos.* 334, who married a tavern-keeper's daughter (Libanius, *Or.* 42. 26).

¹¹⁷ This would also help to explain laws like *CTh* iv. 6. 2 and 3 (336), which ban and penalize the marriages of senators and provincial and local officials with women of low social status.

to evoke the situations and the language of the rhetorical schools.¹¹⁸ It is quite likely that the *quaestor* and other officials responsible for drafting imperial legislation in the late Empire were familiar with products of the rhetorical schools very similar to Seneca's work; such literature was part of the rhetorical training undergone by all well-educated men, and especially those who aspired to the law. Thus we have the intriguing possibility that life (or rather, law) has imitated art. In other words, it is possible that the imperial bureaucrats who actually determined the wording of the law were so steeped in the traditional rhetorical education that, perhaps unconsciously, they transferred the sensational and essentially artificial situations found in the rhetorical exercises into an imperial edict which was to be applied in real-life situations. Some of the inspiration behind Constantine's law may be found in the schoolroom, not the courts. This would help to explain the harsh and drastic measures prescribed in *CTh* ix. 24. 1 for what was essentially an ancient and often quite successful marriage strategy, which had long been practised and tolerated in the Graeco-Roman world. The lurid and violent *raptus* of rhetoric coloured the imperial perception of a custom for which classical law provided no precedent.

This is not to suggest that the *quaestor* and his office or the emperor would promulgate a law to cover a situation existing only in the minds of rhetors and their pupils. Late imperial law was usually prompted by some external stimulus, in order to rectify a contemporary problem which the Emperor felt needed to be addressed, or in response to a particular legal case which had been brought to his attention. Still, the similarities in wording and the appearance in general legislation, apparently for the first time, of one of the most popular subjects in the rhetorical repertoire are worth noting. Rather than looking for actual legal precedents, Greek or Roman, to explain the laws of the early imperial declamations, we should perhaps look to the declamations for help in understanding the highly rhetorical and often enigmatic enactments of late Roman law. Much could be learned from further examination of the relationship between law, rhetoric and reality in late antiquity.

Sweet Briar College, Virginia

¹¹⁸ e.g., two fourth-century laws concern ungrateful children, whose fathers may revoke their emancipation: *Frag. Vat.* 248 (A.D. 330); *CTh* viii. 14. 1; cf. Bonner (op. cit., n. 54), 87–8 on the largely fictitious 'Ingrati sit actio'. A number of declamations involve exposed children and their natural parents: cf. *CTh* v. 10. 1 and

CJ iv. 43. 2 (329); *CTh* v. 9. 1 (331); *CJ* viii. 51. 2 (374); *Sirm. Const.* 5 (412); see Bonner, 125–7. Note also Constantine's highly rhetorical law against the marriage of a woman to her own slave (*CTh* ix. 9. 1; cf. also *CTh* iv. 12. 1) and *Contr* vii. 6: 'Demens qui servo filiam iunxit'.

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Christian Marriage in Byzantium: The Canonical and Liturgical Tradition

JOHN MEYENDORFF

INTRODUCTION

In its interpretation of human sexuality, the family and marriage itself, the Christian tradition, which was accepted as a norm in Byzantine society, is marked by internal tensions. On the one hand, it is the heir of the Old Testament, which sees man's survival in his posterity. Christ's ancestors are mentioned in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, and the glorious couples of the Jewish patriarchs are listed in the prayers of the Byzantine service of nuptial "crowning."

On the other hand, in the New Testament, survival through childbirth ceased to be an end in itself, as it was in Judaism. A childless woman is no longer cursed, and the Jewish law of the levirate, which required that a man marry the childless widow of a dead brother, to "restore his brother's seed," has become meaningless. In a conversation with the Sadducees about the doctrine of the resurrection, Jesus affirms that in the risen life "they do not marry, nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22:23–32; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–40). This leads the apostle Paul to discourage his correspondents from marrying and starting families: "Time is short, so that from now on, those who have wives should be as though they had none" (1 Cor. 7:29).

Without appreciating this eschatological dimension of Christianity, it is impossible to understand the canonical legislation and the liturgical tradition adopted by the Byzantine Orthodox Church. All Byzantine Christians were offered a choice between celibate asceticism and married life, but in either case they were called to anticipate in their lives the eschatological Kingdom of God. At least this is how the Church interpreted the ideal every Christian was called to seek.

The ascetic ideal of celibacy had been adopted by a majority of Christian saints, who were offered

to society as models of perfection and as a striking contrast to the sexual laxity dominant in the pagan society of late antiquity. To quote Peter Brown, "the ideal of virginity, practiced equally by men and women, enjoyed a moral and cultural supremacy in the Christian church."¹ The ascetic trend, which existed in Christianity since New Testament times, was strengthened by "Encratite" or "Messalian" currents, which originated in Manichaeism and were particularly influential in Syria. The two great Syrian writers of the fourth century, Aphrahat and St. Ephrem, considered sexual abstinence as normative after baptism, even for married couples.² Manichaean associations were also present in the West, when St. Augustine considered the sexual instinct (*concupiscentia*) as a consequence of original sin, making celibacy a much more desirable state than marriage.

What is important for our topic is that the Church in Byzantium explicitly rejected these extreme ascetic trends. The council of Gangra (ca. A.D. 340) anathematized "anyone who shall condemn marriage" (canon 1), any "virgin abstaining from marriage because he/she abhors it, and not on account of the beauty and holiness of virginity

¹"The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church," in B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, and J. Leclercq, eds., *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York, 1985), 427. See now P. Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988). For a rather complete collection of texts on the subject, in the original languages with a French translation, see Ch. Munier, *Mariage et virginité dans l'église ancienne* (Berne, 1987).

²See texts in A. Vööbus, *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm, 1951); also Vööbus' comments in *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient, I: The Origin of Asceticism: Early Monasticism in Persia* (Louvain, 1960) (= CSCO 184), pp. 93–95, 17508; cf. also R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study of Early Syrian Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975), 17–18.

itself" (canon 9), "anyone who, while living a virgin life, shall treat married people arrogantly" (canon 10), "any woman, who shall forsake her husband . . . because she abhors marriage" (canon 14), and finally, "anyone who would hesitate to partake of the Eucharist celebrated by a married priest."³ Endorsed later by the Council in Trullo (692),⁴ these rules remained a norm for the Byzantines, particularly with respect to married clergy. It is true, however, that numerous hagiographic texts continued to glorify at least some individuals who seemed to fall under Gangra's anathemas, by leaving their consorts for the sake of asceticism.⁵

But the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith was not expressed only in the ascetic ideal. There existed also another vision of eschatology: the image of the coming Kingdom of God as a wedding feast (Matt. 22:2–12, 25:10; Luke 12:36): a joyful reconciliation of God with his creation. The love song, known as the *Canticle*, which is part of the Old Testament canon of Scripture, was interpreted by both the rabbinical tradition and Christian exegetes as a parable of God's love for his people. This vision reappears clearly in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where it is applied to Christian marriage: "As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it . . . We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones . . . This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:22–33).

This vision of marriage was the principle that determined the whole approach to marriage problems by the Church in Byzantium. There was one God and one Israel; one Christ and one Church. Consequently, absolute monogamy was the norm and *raison d'être* of Christian marriage. According to John Chrysostom, mutual love and dedication of husband and wife was a treasured reality which could not be obliterated even by original sin, and remains in the fallen world, a remnant of the original paradisiac existence of the first couple.⁶ The

moral value of transcending individualism by assuming family responsibility is exalted by Clement of Alexandria.⁷ Even more significantly, the same Chrysostom deliberately opposes the Old Testament emphasis on childbearing as the main justification of marriage: "There are two reasons," he writes, "why marriage was instituted: to make us chaste and to give us children. Of these two reasons, the first takes precedence (προηγούμενη) . . . especially now that the human race has filled the entire earth (ἡ οἰκουμένη πᾶσα τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν ἐμπέπλησται). At first, the procreation of children was desirable, so that each man might have a memorial and a continuation of his own life. There was not yet any hope of resurrection, but rather death held sway, and those who died thought that they would perish utterly after this life. Therefore, God gave them the comfort of children . . . But now that the resurrection is at hand, and we do not speak of death but rather advance toward another life better than the present one, the desire for posterity is superfluous" (περιττὴ ἢ περὶ ταῦτα σπουδῇ).⁸

In the views of the tradition that Chrysostom represents, only *one* marriage can be "chaste," because it reflects, as a unique relationship between two persons, the union between Christ and the Church. For the second-century apologist Athenagoras, "he who severs himself from his first wife, even if she is dead, is an adulterer in disguise (ὁ γὰρ ἀποστερῶν ἑαυτὸν τῆς προτέρας γυναίκος, εἰ καὶ τέθνηκεν, μοιχὸς ἐστὶν παρακεκαλυμμένος). He resists the hand of God, for in the beginning God created one man and one woman."⁹ The idea that death itself does not end a marriage—which is an eternal bond of love to continue in the resurrection—is the vision which explains that remarriage after widowhood or divorce is only tolerated, never encouraged. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, known as a sophisticated intellectual, says it rather brashly: "If there were two Christs, there would be two husbands, or two wives; since Christ is one—the one head of the Church—there is one flesh

³G. A. Rhallis and M. Potlis, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* (Athens, 1852–55) (hereafter RPS), III, pp. 96–121.

⁴RPS, II, p. 309.

⁵The popularity of the figure of St. Alexis, the "man of God," is a good example. His Life, originally in Syriac, became widespread in both Greek and Latin. Alexis abandoned his bride on their wedding day for the sake of the ascetic life; see the recent study by C. E. Stebbins, "Les origines de la légende de saint Alexis," *RBPB* 51 (1973), 497–507.

⁶*Homily on the Writ of Divorce*, 4, PG 51, col. 221.

⁷"True manhood is shown not in the choice of celibate life; on the contrary, the prize in the contest of men is won by him who has trained life himself by the discharge of the duties of husband and father, and by the supervision of a household. On the other hand, he who has no family is in most respects untried." *Stromateis*, VII 12, 70; ed. O. Stählin, GCS 17 (1909), p. 51; trans. J. E. L. Oulton and H. Chadwick in *The Library of Christian Classics*, II (Philadelphia, 1954), 138.

⁸*Homily on Marriage*, 3, PG 51, col. 213.

⁹*Legatio pro Christianis*, 33, ed. E. J. Goodspeed, *Die älteste Apologeten* (Göttingen, 1914), p. 354; trans. C. Richardson in *The Library of Christian Classics*, I (Philadelphia, 1953), 337.

also; the second should be rejected. And if you forbid a second marriage, would you allow a third? The first is legal, the second is condoned, the third is illegitimate, and that which is beyond is swine-like . . ." (ὁ δὲ ὑπὲρ τοῦτο χοιρώδης).¹⁰

Before examining the canonical and liturgical sources, it is worth noting that this view of marriage, which represents an absolute consensus within the Byzantine Christian tradition, is in stark contrast with the view that prevailed in Western medieval Christendom. In the Latin West the dominant position was the old Roman idea, that marriage is a contract between two consenting partners. Christianity kept the contract idea but added two dimensions: that the contract is indissoluble, except by the death of one of the partners, and that sexual activity (in itself a consequence of original sin), becomes acceptable in marriage only for the sake of childbirth. Consequently, the main struggle of the Church in the West was to preserve the indissolubility of marriage, while condoning any number of remarriages after widowhood. In the East divorce is even required in some cases (for instance, in cases of adultery), but remarriage is never encouraged.

I. THE DISCIPLINE OF THE ANCIENT CANONICAL TRADITION

The second-century Christian apologist Athenagoras, already quoted above, in his *Supplication* addressed to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, also writes: "Each of us [Christians] thinks of his wife whom he married *according to the laws that we have laid down*."¹¹ Neither before nor after Christianity became a state religion did Christians challenge the existing legal norms, fixed by Roman law, concerning the conclusion of the marriage bond. Roman law considered marriage to be a contract between two free, consenting partners, concluded before witnesses. Consequently, slaves who were not free to give "free consent," could not marry legally. This legal emphasis on consent is expressed in the frequently repeated legal principle that "nuptias, non concubitus, sed consensus facit" ("marriage is realized in the consent, not in cohabitation"), which is taken for granted as well in the standard Byzantine *Nomocanon in Fourteen Titles* and the Slavic *Kormchaya Kniga*.¹² Until at least the

end of the ninth century, the Byzantines generally concluded marriages as civil contracts without any involvement of the Church in the legal aspect of the marriage contract.

This does not mean, of course, that the Church was indifferent to the behavior of its members with respect to marriage and sexual behavior, but that marital and sexual problems were approached by church authority on the level of pastoral, sacramental, and penitential discipline, not civil law. The Church expected a Christian to behave in accordance with the implications of his baptism, which allowed him to participate in the sacramental, eucharistic communion. If he or she departed from Christian norms, this departure could imply ecclesiastical sanctions, including temporal or permanent excommunication, even when no civil legislation was violated. Thus divorce was a purely civil procedure, whereas remarriage involved penitential discipline.

As mentioned earlier, the central, basic norm of the Church's attitude toward marriage during the first millennium of Christianity is the idea that the mystical union of God and Israel, of Christ and the Church, is reflected only in a marriage that is perfectly monogamous. The idea is already explicit in St. Paul: widowers are allowed to remarry but are not encouraged to do so (1 Cor. 7:39–40). Early Christian writers show a remarkable consensus in supporting that view: the consensus includes Tertullian, Athenagoras, the *Shepherd* of Hermas, Clement, and Origen. In the fourth century St. John Chrysostom composed a treatise addressed *To a Young Widow*, encouraging her to remain in her widowhood rather than succumb to human weakness and remarry.¹³

Chrysostom's early contemporary, St. Basil of Caesarea, is the author of numerous letters, a number of which were accepted in the Byzantine Church as normative canonical texts and sanctioned as such by the Council in Trullo (692). He writes: "The rule establishes one year of excommunication for those who marry a second time. Other authorities even require two years. Those

Glava Kormchei Knigi kak istorichesky i praktichesky istochnik russkago brachnago prava (Moscow, 1887); K. Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes du 1er au XIe siècle* (Paris, 1970); J. Dauvillier and C. de Clerq, *Le mariage dans le droit canonique oriental* (Paris, 1936).

¹³ Λόγος εἰς νεωτέραν χηρεύουσαν, ed. G. H. Ettlinger and trans. B. Grillet, Jean Chrysostome, *A une jeune veuve sur le mariage unique*, SC 138 (Paris, 1968). The introduction includes references to earlier Christian authors, with whom Chrysostom agrees.

¹⁰ Or. 37. 8, PG 36, col. 292B.

¹¹ . . . κατὰ τοὺς ὑφ' ἡμῶν τεθειμένους νόμους; *Legatio*, ibid.

¹² The standard references can be found in J. Zhisman, *Das Eherecht der orientalischen Kirche* (Vienna, 1864); A. Pavlov, 50-ya

who marry a third time are often excommunicated for three or four years. And such a union is not called marriage, but polygamy, or rather punishable fornication . . . (πορνείαν κεκολασμένην).¹⁴ This negative attitude toward second or third marriages is maintained in the ninth century by St. Theodore of Stoudios; recognizing that civil law authorized such unions, he forbids their blessing in church.¹⁵ The canons attributed to Patriarch Nicephorus (806–815)¹⁶ also forbid the “crowning” of any marriage except the first.¹⁷ This principle, which forbade ecclesiastical sanction in cases of consecutive bigamy and trigamy, must have been challenged first in the case of emperors. In the ninth century Theodore of Stoudios deplors the evil example of Emperor Constantine V Copronymos, who was married three times.¹⁸

It remains that the few selected texts, which I quote here—examples can easily be multiplied—clearly illustrate the principle lying behind the attitude of the Church: the goal was to preserve the norm of a single Christian marriage. However, this principle was applied uncompromisingly only in the case of the clergy: ordination to the diaconate and the priesthood was strictly reserved to either celibates or men married once to a woman who had not been married before. Remarriage of widowed priests was excluded.¹⁹

The relaxation of the norm, in the case of laity, is limited to two or, eventually, three successive marriages, with the absolute exclusion of a fourth. It is noteworthy that successive marriages are limited in cases of both widowhood and divorce. Brief remarks about those limitations are in order.

(1) The famous ecclesiastical and political turmoil connected with the fourth marriage of Em-

peror Leo VI in 906 need not be related here again, except in recalling the stipulations of the document that put an end to the dispute, the *Tome of Union* of 920. This text is the most solemn set of rules accepted by both church and empire concerning the conditions of successive marriages. Totally forbidding a fourth marriage, the *Tome* also places strict limitations on a third: a person, aged forty or over, can enter a third union, incurring excommunication for five years, but only if he or she has no children from a previous marriage. A person aged forty, with children, is forbidden to marry a third time. A person aged thirty can get married a third time, even if he or she has children from previous marriages, but will be excommunicated for four years.²⁰

(2) Discouraged in the case of widowhood, remarriage was seen as even less acceptable following divorce. This is illustrated by another and earlier imperial scandal: the divorce of Constantine VI from his wife Mary the Paphlagonian, and remarriage with Theodote (795), which resulted in the “moechian” controversy. Condoned “by economy” (κατ’ οἰκονομίαν) by the patriarch, the remarriage was protested by the Stoudites and created a schism in the Church. It was a characteristic conflict which involved not so much the very principle of *oikonomia*—since both sides admitted it—but its implications. For the politically minded patriarchs, *oikonomia* was becoming a form of realistic accommodation with the powers-that-be. For the monks, it was an expression of divine mercy for the repentant sinner: according to Theodore of Stoudios, Constantine VI could not expect *oikonomia* as long as he continued to live in adulterous union with Theodote, but could be pardoned if that union was broken. Symptomatically, in this case, as in many other historical instances, it was not so much divorce that constituted a problem as remarriage, although divorce certainly made remarriage even more unacceptable.²¹

The Byzantine Church, though proclaiming and cherishing the principle of the indissolubility of

¹⁴Canon 4, RPS, IV, p. 102.

¹⁵Ep. I, 50, PG 99, col. 1093C.

¹⁶The attribution is incorrect, although some of the texts may go back to Nicephorus (see M. Jugie, “Les canons disciplinaires attribués à saint Nicéphore,” *EO* 26 [1927], 419 ff); the numbering of the “canons of Nicephorus” differs in various editions, and no critical edition exists.

¹⁷RPS, IV, p. 427 (canon 2).

¹⁸Ep. I, 50 (PG 99, col. 1092A). However, it is not quite clear in Theodore’s letter whether or not the third marriage of Constantine V had been blessed by the church (cf. Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 165).

¹⁹This legislation concerning the clergy is found in the so-called *Apostolic Canons*, which originated as part of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a large disciplinary collection adopted by the Church of Antioch in the 4th century. The *Apostolic Canons* (but not the *Apostolic Constitutions* as a whole) officially became a part of the Byzantine canonical corpus through a decision of the Council in Trullo (692). For the rules concerning married clergy, see particularly *Ap. Canons* 18 and 26 (RPS, II, pp. 25, 26), and *Trull.* 6 (RPS, II, p. 318).

²⁰Critical text and translation of the *Tome* in L. G. Westerink, *Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople: Miscellaneous Writings*, DOT 6 (= CFHB 20) (Washington, D.C., 1981), 59–71.

²¹Cf. the arguments of Theodore in connection with the “moechian” controversy, particularly in *Letters* I, 51 and 52, to *Naukratios* (PG 99, cols. 1084–96). On the meaning of *oikonomia*, as applicable only to *repentant* sinners, as expressed by Theodore and later Nicholas Mystikos, see J. H. Erickson, “*Oikonomia* in Byzantine Canon Law,” in K. Pennington and R. Somerville, *Law, Church and Society: Essays in Honor of Stephan Kuttner* (Philadelphia, 1977), 225–36.

marriage, as affirmed by Jesus according to the Synoptics' accounts (Matt. 5:31–32, 19:3–12, Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18), never understood indissolubility to be a *legal* absolute. It condoned the famous exception, found in Matt. 19:9 (παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας), and recognized adultery as a legitimate cause of divorce, covering other situations, where the mystical union of husband and wife had, in reality, ceased to exist, that is, situations practically equivalent to the death of one of the partners (disappearance, insanity, violence).²² However, even in cases when divorce was admitted, remarriage was, in principle, only tolerated and subject to penitential conditions, mentioned earlier.

I have discussed so far the strict limitations placed on the *number* of successive marriages. There were of course also limitations in the case of the first marriage, which are spelled out in either imperial legislation or canons or both. I can only mention them here, without further discussion. It would be interesting to study how widely such limitations were applied in practice. Thus, the old Roman principle, requiring free consent of both parties, is endorsed by canonical texts, which nullify a marriage in cases of the woman's abduction.²³ The minimum age for marriage was fixed by Justinian's *Code* to fourteen for men and twelve for women, but diplomatic requirements sometimes made this rule flexible. To quote a well-known example of the late Byzantine period: the Serbian Kral' Milutin married Simonis, daughter of Emperor Andronicus II, when she was only five (1299).²⁴ One may presume that other rules—those, for instance, that forbade marriages between blood relatives up to the seventh degree of consanguinity²⁵—were also occasionally overlooked. However, the ban established by the Council in

Trullo against the marriage of two brothers with two sisters²⁶ seems to have been applied strictly, since the non-application of the rule in Western Christendom is often mentioned by Byzantine polemicists as one of the "Latin heresies."²⁷ Also important was that the *Code* of Justinian,²⁸ followed by the Council in Trullo,²⁹ established the legal identification between blood relationship and the "spiritual" relationship created at baptism. Thus godparents and their children were strictly forbidden to marry not only with the person sponsored at baptism but also with his or her relatives. This rule is illustrated by the famous—and certainly legendary—episode reported by the Kievan *Primary Chronicle* concerning Princess Olga, who rejected the marriage proposal of the Byzantine emperor because he was her baptismal sponsor (957). The emperor then shows his frustration by marveling at her knowledge of canon law.³⁰

The last important disciplinary situation, coming from the first centuries of Christianity, is the requirement of unity of faith between the spouses. The Council of Chalcedon (451) forbade an Orthodox to marry a non-Christian or a heretic, unless the latter were to convert to the Orthodox faith.³¹ The Council in Trullo orders such marriages to be considered as void; however, following St. Paul, it allows "mixed" marriages to stand if they were concluded before one of the partners converted to Orthodoxy, because then the "believing" partner sanctifies the "unbelieving" one.³² The problem, for a strict application of the rule, was to define who was a "heretic." During the first millennium of Christianity, since the Church did not have to be directly involved in the act of concluding marriage contracts, the question was solved on an individual basis. There were certainly many variables as to who was a "heretic" during the prolonged Christological disputes of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. No study has yet been made on their implications for the discipline of

²²Cf. a recent study of divorce in Byzantium by Bp. Peter L'Huillier, "The Indissolubility of Marriage in Orthodox Law and Practice," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 32 (1988), 3, 199–221.

²³St. Basil, Canons 22, 30, RPS, IV, pp. 150–51, 169.

²⁴On this famous case, see M. Lascaris, *Vizantiske princeze u srednjevekovoj Srbiji. Prilog istoriji vizantisko-srpskikh odnoša od kraja XII do sredino XV veka* (Belgrade, 1926), 58.

²⁵Cf. the synodal decree of Patriarch Alexius Stoudites (1025–43) in V. Grumel, *Régestes des actes du patriarche byzantin, I, Actes des patriarches* (Paris, 1932), 844. The decree was later reconfirmed in several legislative texts, and exceptions to the rule had to be sanctioned by special synodal dispensation. In 1278 such a dispensation was granted to Michael Angelus, son of Michael II of Epiros, who had a sixth degree of affinity with his wife, Anna, daughter of Emperor Michael VIII; cf. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, IV (St. Petersburg, 1899), p. 382.

²⁶Canon 54, RPS, II, p. 432.

²⁷Cf., for instance, Michael Cerularius, *Letter I to Peter of Antioch*, ed. C. Will, *Acta et scripta quae de controversiis ecclesiae graecae et latinae composita* (Leipzig, 1861; repr. Frankfurt, 1963), 181.

²⁸*CI* V, 4, pp. 195 ff.

²⁹Canon 53, RPS, II, p. 428–29.

³⁰*Pereklyukala mya esi, Ol'ga, Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. D. S. Likhachev and B. A. Romanov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), I, 44; trans. S. H. Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), p. 169; on the importance of ritual kinship, see particularly R. Macrides, "The Byzantine Godfather," *BMGS* 11 (1987), 139–62.

³¹Canon 14, RPS, II, p. 251.

³²Canon 72, *ibid.*, p. 471.

marriage. Since the estrangement between East and West was also a prolonged and gradual process, no uniform and strict attitude developed on the issue of "mixed" marriage with Latins practically until the fall of Constantinople. For the tenth century, we have the famous statement of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, asserting that "Franks" are neither "infidels" nor "unbaptized," and that imperial marriages with them are to be allowed.³³ Four emperors of the Comnenian dynasty married Latin wives. It might be assumed, however, that all of them joined the Byzantine Orthodox Church of their imperial husbands. The same can probably be said about most of the numerous other cases when Latin wives entered the household of the Byzantine imperial family or of the Byzantine nobility in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, a Greek wife would normally join the church of her Latin husband. We know of only one case of deliberate resistance: born a Latin, Margaret of Hungary joined Orthodoxy when she married Emperor Isaac II Angelus; in 1204 she remarried with Boniface of Montferrat, but, for several years, refused to rejoin the Latin Church. Innocent III congratulated her when she finally did in 1208.³⁴ In most cases, however, Byzantine emperors and noblemen considered their daughters to be more expendable than their sons,³⁵ and were ready for diplomatic reasons to give them as wives not only to Latin princes but also to Mongol khans and Turkish sultans. Obviously, in those cases, there was no Orthodox Church blessing. Canonists were rigorous in forbidding Orthodox priests to "crown" such marriages.³⁶

Indeed, in that late period, a formal church ceremony had become an absolute requirement for a legal marriage. Thus marriage law and liturgical practice had become inseparable.

II. THE LITURGICAL TRADITION

As we mentioned earlier, the Christian Church did not initially introduce any special new way of concluding marriage contracts, which remained civil contracts. However, the Church was over-

whelmingly concerned with the manner in which married life was actually lived by Christian couples, as can be seen in the abundant canonical regulations discussed above. Indeed, Christian marriage was seen as a "mystery" (Eph. 5:32), directly connected with the Eucharist, the central mystery of the Christian faith, making human bodies into "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). In ancient Christian exegesis, the wedding in Cana of Galilee, attended by Jesus (John 2:1–11), is unanimously understood as a figure of the Eucharist, which itself is an anticipation of the Kingdom of God. An authentically Christian marriage is therefore a "eucharistic" event, whereas marriages that depart from the Christian norm (second marriages, mixed marriages, etc.) require penance, that is, temporary or permanent abstention from eucharistic participation.

Already in the second century, Tertullian writes that a Christian marriage "which is arranged by the church, confirmed by the oblation (i.e., the Eucharist), and sealed by the blessing, is proclaimed by the angels and ratified by the Father."³⁷ In the ninth century, we find Theodore of Studios still agreeing with Tertullian and contrasting the authentically Christian way of getting married at the Eucharistic celebration with second and third marriages which are concluded without the participation of the Church, so that the couple is admitted to communion only after a period of penance.³⁸

Marriage customs, inherited from Antiquity, continued to exist, particularly the custom of betrothal gifts (ἀρραβών) given by the bridegroom to the bride, and the use of crowns. The most frequent form of symbolizing a betrothal was an exchange of rings, while marriage itself included a crowning of the bridal pair. Early Christian preachers fulminate against pagan customs used at marriages as well as against the long festal excesses that accompanied them. However, already in the fourth century, St. Gregory of Nazianzus informs us that some Christian families asked the "crowning" to be performed by a Christian priest, although Gregory himself believes that this is better done by the father of the bridegroom.³⁹ St. John Chrysostom takes another step in the gradual Christianization of "crowning" by giving it a symbolic meaning: by their crowns, a Christian couple

³³ *De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins (Budapest, 1949), pp. 70–76.

³⁴ *Letters*, XI, 152 (PL 205, col. 1467).

³⁵ Cf. D. M. Nicol, "Mixed Marriages in Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century," *Studies in Church History*, I, ed. C. W. Dugmore and C. Duggan (London, 1964); repr. in Nicol, *Byzantium: Its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World* (London, 1972), 168.

³⁶ Cf. Demetrios Khomatianos, in J. B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra spicilegio solesmensi parata* (Rome, 1891), p. 713.

³⁷ "[Matrimonium] quod ecclesia conciliat et confirmat oblatio et obsignat benedictio, angeli renuntiant, pater rato habet," *Ad uxorem*, II, 6; ed. C. Munier, SC 273 (Paris, 1980), p. 148.

³⁸ *Ep.* I, 50, PG 99, col. 1093AC.

³⁹ *Ep.* 231, PG 37, col. 374BD.

signifies victory over carnal pleasure.⁴⁰ By the sixth century, the patriarch himself was normally performing the crowning at imperial weddings.⁴¹

Still optional, and probably limited to the higher levels of society, a limited involvement of the clergy in betrothals and weddings is therefore a reality since the early centuries. Eventually, church "blessing" would be sanctioned by the *Ecloga* (741), as an alternate form of concluding legal marriage.⁴² Something of a legal and social watershed occurred with the publication by Emperor Leo VI (886–912) of his Novel 89: "We order," the emperor wrote, "that marital cohabitation be sanctioned by the witness of the sacred blessing."⁴³ This text gives the Church, for the first time, an exclusive privilege to legalize marriages, placing church courts in charge of all legal problems connected with marriage, including divorce and its consequences. Not only is the "blessing" becoming obligatory, but ecclesiastical canonical authority is being extended very substantially over the life of society as a whole. However, Leo's novel remains within the framework of the ancient Roman law, which limits the right to legal marriage to freemen, who can give consent to the union, thus excluding slaves. Only two centuries later, Emperor Alexius Comnenus, in 1095, motivating his decision by a reference to "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," conferred on slaves the right to be married legally in church.⁴⁴

The gradual adoption of church blessing first as a desirable, then an obligatory, factor in legalizing marriage can be followed in the history of liturgical rites. It seems that the Church assumed the exclusive role of blessing marriages, even before the novel of Leo VI, in areas beyond the imperial borders, because there, in countries dominated by non-Christian rulers, it was the main—if not the only—social structure able to give legal validity to Christian marriages. Thus in Armenia a liturgy of marriage existed already at the time of Patriarch Nerses I (364–372),⁴⁵ and one finds such a liturgy

also, as early as the fifth century, in Western sacramentaries.⁴⁶ In Byzantium, however, since the fourth century, priests could be called to "bless" a marriage, but the invitation was optional and the marriage itself was concluded in a civil ceremony. Timothy I of Alexandria (381–385) condemns such blessings bestowed upon marriages that were unacceptable from the Church's point of view,⁴⁷ and Chrysostom prefers that blessings be given on the eve of the marriage, to avoid participation by the priest in the secular festivities that inevitably accompanied marriages.⁴⁸ Such blessings of the couples, or of the wedding crowns, often occurred in homes, where the priest was specially invited.⁴⁹

In the eighth and ninth centuries, however, the texts witness to a new practice: the couple is brought to church, placed before the altar and, during the Eucharist, "in front of the whole people," the priest recites a short prayer: "O Lord, stretch out Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling place, and unite Thy servant and Thy handmaid: unite them in one mind; crown them into one flesh, since Thou has blessed them to be wed to each other; make their marriage to be honorable; preserve their bed blameless, mercifully grant that they may live together in purity."⁵⁰

Theodore of Stoudios, who describes this liturgical act, takes for granted that, following the blessing, the couple partakes of eucharistic communion: "The principle and goal of the wedding," he writes, "is the holy and unique body and blood of Christ" (κεφάλαιον γὰρ καὶ τέλος τῆς ζευξέως τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ἐνιαῖον σῶμα καὶ αἷμα Χριστοῦ). Consequently, if the priest gives communion to a couple that enters an adulterous union (as was the case with Constantine VI and Theodote), he commits blasphemy; if he gives communion to only the

⁴⁰ K. Stevenson, "The Origins of the Nuptial Blessing," *The Heythrop Journal* 21.4 (1980), 412–16.

⁴¹ *Resp.* 11, RPS, IV, p. 337.

⁴² *Homily on Marriage*, PG 51, col. 211.

⁴³ Chrysostom speaks clearly of the priest being invited to homes for the blessing (*ibid.*; cf. also *In Gen. Homily* 48, PG 54, col. 443).

⁴⁴ Αὐτὸς, Δέσποτα, ἐξαπόστειλον τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐξ ἁγίου κατοικητηρίου σου καὶ ἄρμωσον τῷ δούλῳ σου τὴν δούλην σου. Σύζευξον αὐτοὺς ἐν ὁμοφροσύνῃ. Ἐνώσον αὐτοὺς εἰς σάρκα μίαν, οὓς εὐδόκησας συναφθῆναι ἀλλήλοις. Τίμιον τὸν γάμον ἀνάδειξον, ἁμίαντον αὐτῶν τὴν κοίτην διατήρησον, ἀκηλίδωτον αὐτῶν τὴν συμβίωσιν διαμεῖναι εὐδόκησον. Theodore of Stoudios, *Ep.* I, 22, *To Symeon the Monk*, PG 99, col. 973CD; cf. an identical description of the ceremony in *Ep.* I, 31, *To the Monks of Saccoudion*, *ibid.*, col. 1012D. The expressions of this short prayer are found verbatim in the marriage rite existing today.

⁴⁰ *Homily 9 on 1 Tim.*, PG 62, col. 546.

⁴¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Bonn ed., I, 283 (crowning of Maurice in 594).

⁴² It recognized the validity of a marriage concluded ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ . . . δι' εὐλογίας (*Ecloga*, I, 8, ed. Zepos, *Jus*, II, p. 23).

⁴³ Τὰ συνοικέσια τῇ μαρτυρίᾳ τῆς ἱερᾶς εὐλογίας ἐρρώσθαι κελεύομεν, ed. P. Noailles and A. Dain, *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage* (Paris, 1944), p. 297. The most recent study of this novel is by P. L'Huillier, "Novella 89 of Leo the Wise on Marriage: An Insight into Its Theoretical and Practical Impact," in *GOTR* 32.2 (1987), 153–62.

⁴⁴ Novels 35 and 35B, Zepos, *Jus*, I, 341–46.

⁴⁵ Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 146–48.

wife, or only the husband, there is no marriage “in Christ.”⁵¹

The earliest Byzantine text of two wedding services to be celebrated independently of the Eucharist goes back to the eighth century.⁵² One of them, specifically requires that communion be given to the couple—presumably with the reserved sacrament. Both are brief. The first includes a litany and three brief prayers for the blessing of the crowns and a “common cup” of eucharistic communion. It appears in almost all euchologia of the tenth to twelfth centuries and represents the nucleus of what the later, developed rite would look like, with the exception that the common cup, and its particular prayer, *follow* eucharistic communion and constitute therefore a separate symbolic act.⁵³ Concurrently, the older practice, known to Theodore of Stoudios, of blessing marriage during the general public eucharistic celebration is sometimes adopted as late as the fifteenth century: the crowning takes place immediately after the communion of the people, with the couple also receiving communion and a special common cup.⁵⁴

However, it was inevitable that the legal obligation to have *all* marriages blessed by the church, announced by the legislation of Leo VI and Alexis I, would make it more and more impractical to connect the marriage rite with the Eucharist. Once it was invested with the function of legalizing all marriages, the Church had to become more flexible, and began to bless marriages even in cases when such unions were incompatible with a joint eucharistic participation of the couple: second and third marriages, mixed marriages, and so on. In order to avoid singling out (and embarrassing) the couples, the simplest way was to separate the marriage rite from the public Eucharist.

⁵¹ *Ep.*, I, 50, to *Naukratios*, *ibid.*, col. 1096A.

⁵² It is contained in Barb. gr. 336, was studied by J. Goar, *Euchologion, sive rituale graecorum*, (Venice, 1730; repr. Hildesheim), and is of Calabrian origin. It is further analyzed by G. Baldanze, “Il rito de matrimonio nell’Euchologio Barberini 336,” *EphL* 93 (1979), 316–51.

⁵³ Cf. Sinaitici gr. 957 (9th–10th century), 958 (10th century), and 962 (11th–12th century) and Coisl. 213 (dated 1027), in A. Dmitrievsky, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei khrauyaschikhysya v bibliotekakh pravoslavnogo vostoka*, II, *Euchologia* (Kiev, 1901; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), pp. 4, 28–32, 73–74, 1016–17. For a brief history of this rite, see also K. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites* (London, 1982), 95–107.

⁵⁴ Cf. Cryp. G. b. VII, 2 (10th century), analyzed by G. I. Pasarelli, “La cerimonia dello *stefanoma* (Incoronazione) nei riti matrimoniali bizantini secondo il codice Cryptense G. b. VII,” *EphL* 93 (1979), 381–91. A very similar practice is witnessed by a euchologion of 1475 (Athon. Lavra–88, in Dmitrievsky, *op. cit.*, p. 441).

This seems to have occurred already in the tenth century, in the case of imperial marriages. Constantine Porphyrogenitus informs us that, on the day of their marriage, the imperial couple would be betrothed in the palace church of St. Stephen, and would leave during a liturgy celebrated by the patriarch, only to return for the crowning.⁵⁵ Second marriages, which were not “crowned” at the time of Theodore of Stoudios—and would therefore be sanctioned by civil law only—were “crowned” in the late eleventh century. Nicetas of Herakleia writes: “Strictly speaking, one should not crown those who marry a second time, but the custom of the Great Church does not maintain this strictness: it places marriage crowns on the heads of even such couples . . . They must, however, be prevented from communion to the Holy Mysteries for one or two years.”⁵⁶ Modern printed Orthodox euchologia contain a special rite for “second marriages,” which do include crowning, but is, in fact, only an extension of the betrothal rite and possesses a penitential character.

In the late Byzantine period, as witnessed by Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1420), the ritual of marriage was practically identical to what is found today in printed editions. However, in cases of first marriages, the priest, before giving the common cup to the couple, would exclaim, “The presanctified Holy Things to the Holy” (*Τὰ προηγιασμένα ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις*) and give them communion. But communion would be omitted, if the marriage was marked by impediments requiring penance.⁵⁷

My task in this paper was limited to a necessarily brief introduction to the canonical and liturgical tradition of marriage in Byzantium. Both the canonical and liturgical sources on the subject are very abundant and, unfortunately, rarely studied. They are of great importance for understanding the ideals and norms accepted by Byzantine society, because they were based on Christian scrip-

⁵⁵ *Le livre des cérémonies*, II, 50 (41), ed. A. Vogt (Paris, 1939), II, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Ἡ μὲν ἀκριβεία τοὺς διγάμους οὐκ οἶδε στεφανοῦν, ἡ δὲ ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ συνήθεια τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐ παρατηρεῖται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς διγάμοις τοὺς νυμφικοὺς στεφάνους ἐπιτίθει . . . πλὴν ὀφείλουσιν ἓνα ἢ καὶ δεῦτερον ἑνιαυτὸν κολυθῆναι τῆς τῶν ἁγίων μυστηρίων μεταλήψεως. RPS, V, p. 441. A euchologion of 1153 (Sinaiticus gr. 973) foresees the case when only one of the partners marries for the second time: in that case, he or she is crowned by his or her partner, while the latter—who is entering a first marriage—is crowned by the priest (Dimitrievsky, *op. cit.*, p. 126).

⁵⁷ *Against the heresies and on the Divine Temple*, 282, PG 155, cols. 512–13.

tures and the theology of the Church. I am aware, however, that the historical study of such norms cannot be separated from social realities. How much were they really inspiring society? How strictly were they understood and applied? I have referred to such problems only in passing, referring particularly to “mixed” marriages. But the reverse is also true: a medieval society, like that of Byzantium, took seriously not only rules and reg-

ulations, imposed by state and church authority, but also the spiritual and “eschatological” dimension of human relations. The Christian ideal of marriage—unique and eternal—was the norm by which social realities were judged, even when they were very far from reflecting the ideal.

St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological
Seminary and Fordham University



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ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES AND EARLY-TERM ABORTIFACIENTS DURING CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES*

It is generally agreed that oral contraceptives are a product of the second half of the twentieth century and that early-term abortifacients are an even more recent discovery, still in the process of development. This article presents evidence that, contrary to this consensus, pre-modern (like present-day) traditional medical systems employed chemical means of birth-control and — although the evidence for this is less conclusive — that such chemical substances were substantially effective in controlling the birth-rate.

The accepted account of the history of birth-control rests on a particular understanding (sometimes misunderstanding) of what science says is possible. In this article, ancient sources which discuss birth-control (mostly medical) will be interwoven with modern reports from laboratory, clinical and other scientific studies of anti-fertility agents. The article also draws on medieval and early modern sources for the light they can shed on the historical use of some pharmaceutical agents. From this combination of historical and scientific data, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the historical records are reliable rather than misleading in suggesting that our female ancestors had some control over their reproductive processes.

It is widely acknowledged that, since at least the second century B.C., populations in the West have been deliberately limiting their rates of growth and, at times, slowing them to below replacement rates. It is thought that this has been achieved through means such as celibacy and sexual restraint, delayed marriages,

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non-fertile intercourse (what Philippe Ariès called “sexual perversity”), the rhythm method, coitus interruptus, vaginal suppositories, condoms, abortions, infanticide and child abandonment. In searching the historical records, however, it is difficult to find proof that any of these practices were sufficiently widespread to produce the results for which we do have evidence: that somehow, in some way, or through some combination of means, and during certain periods, families limited their rates of reproduction.

While it has been suggested that non-surgical abortifacients may have been effective (if only slightly) as a consequence of such a high level of toxicity as to constitute, in the words of Marie-Thérèse Fontanille, a “demographic danger” as a result of “catastrophic female mortality”,¹ the idea that the use of contraceptives (in particular oral contraceptives) might have been significant has been rejected simply on the basis that those prescribed could not have been effective. Most of the contraceptives recorded in history are plant substances, and plants have been thought incapable of producing the complex animal molecular hormonal structures that affect fertility. Yet plants have long been used as sources of both contraceptives and early-term abortifacients. Evidence for such usage can be found throughout history, from the earliest known Egyptian medical document down to present-day traditional medical systems.² Despite the fact that there is anecdotal evidence in literary texts, and that there is also a great variety of legal, ecclesiastical, theological and medical sources which discuss contraceptives, modern historians have rejected the idea that these agents were functional birth-control measures because they think that modern science demonstrates that such substances could not have been effective. Ariès argued for the virtual absence of contraception in Europe before the seventeenth century on account of its “unthinkability”, while Keith Hopkins, who studied the early history of contraception, describes ancient oral

¹ Marie-Thérèse Fontanille, *Abortement et contraception dans la médecine gréco-romaine* (Paris, 1977), p. 195. For source references, see also Enzo Nardi, *Procurato aborto nel mondo greco romano* (Milan, 1971). A recent study of the drugs used to induce abortions asserts that some may have been effective: Achim Keller, *Die Abortiva in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Quellen und Studien für Geschichte der Pharmazie, xlvii, Stuttgart, 1988).

² See Kahun Papyri, nos. 21 (3/6), 22 (3/7), in Hildegard von Deines, Hermann Grapow and Wolfhart Westendorf, *Übersetzung der medizinischen Texte*, 2 vols. (Grundriss der Medizin der alten Ägypter, iv, Berlin, 1958), i, p. 277, ii, p. 211.

contraceptives as “ineffectual potions”.³ Scholarship has placed contraceptives more in the realm of magic than of science. My hypothesis is no more than the axiom that one should accept the testimony of the records unless there is compelling reason to reject their validity, *and we have good reason to accept their claims that these agents affected fertility*.⁴

In justifying this claim, this article will proceed from a general review of the evidence provided by modern science concerning plant-based contraceptives and abortifacients to a consideration of a number of plants used in this way in ancient and medieval times. It will then consider medieval additions to classical knowledge, examining how medieval scholars updated texts, before moving on to consider more generally how knowledge of birth-control was transmitted, assimilated and, to some degree, lost.

I

PLANT-BASED CONTRACEPTIVES AND MODERN SCIENCE

The subject of plant-based contraceptives is complex, and requires an introduction. The follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone-releasing factors necessary for ovulation which occur in mammals were thought to belong only to the animal and not to the plant kingdom. Two studies published in 1933 were the first to call this view into question. Boleslaw Skarzynski reported to the Polish Academy of Sciences that he had obtained a substance that resembled a human female hormone (trihydroox-

³ Philippe Ariès, *Histoire des populations françaises et de leurs attitudes devant la vie depuis le XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1948), pp. 494-521; see also a later article, Philippe Ariès, “Sur les origines de la contraception en France”, *Population*, viii (1953), p. 466, in which he defended his earlier position (“C’est la thèse de l’impensabilité que j’ai défendue”); Keith Hopkins, “Contraception in the Roman Empire”, *Comp. Studies in Society and Hist.*, viii (1965-6), p. 131 n. (with reference to oral contraceptives in Dioscorides); for the same view, see Norman E. Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* (Baltimore, 1936; repr. New York, 1963). For some interesting material, see Shirley Green, *The Curious History of Contraception* (New York, 1971).

⁴ Some readers of this article may claim that I am guilty of the sin of historical positivism because the study uses modern science to validate historical practices, and selected ones at that. I hope they will not. The current views about the effectiveness of birth-control rest on what earlier historians regarded as possible and this in turn was based on what contemporary science regarded as the rules of nature. Now, in 1991, science has expanded its knowledge, but historians have not taken into account the new findings. Since modern science gives us evidence that the contraceptives and abortifacients that our ancestors took did work, I am asking no more of my colleagues than that they consider the historical record at its face value, or, at least, confront it before rejecting it.

yoestrin) from the willow.⁵ In the same year Adolf Butenandt and H. Jacobi announced that the date palm and the pomegranate produced female sex hormones.⁶ These reports were at first greeted with scepticism, because plant substances were not thought to function as human hormones and, moreover, because scientists could not duplicate Butenandt and Jacobi's laboratory results.⁷

While the findings of Skarzynski, Butenandt and Jacobi had little immediate impact, however, the results of other important research on the anti-fertility effects of plants on mammals, in the field of animal science, were more generally accepted.⁸ During the 1940s it was observed that Australian sheep grazing on a particular type of clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*) experienced sharply reduced fertility. The explanation was found to be the presence in the clover of isoflavonoids, which induce oestrogenic activity in mammals.⁹

Research in anthropology has also yielded important information, especially in studies where the findings are reinforced by laboratory tests. In 1960, following up reports that Thai women take an extract of the root *Pueraria mirifica* (a close relative of kudzu) to induce abortion, D. B. Bounds and G. S. Pope isolated a compound called miroestrol that is more medicinally active than oestrone.¹⁰ Anthropological studies such as this one are important sources of data about actual usage.¹¹

⁵ Boleslaw Skarzynski, "An Oestrogenic Substitute from Plant Materials", *Nature*, cxxxi (1933), p. 766; Boleslaw Skarzynski, "Recherches sur les corps oestrogènes d'origine végétale", *Zoologischer Bericht*, xxxv (1933), p. 323.

⁶ Adolf Butenandt and H. Jacobi, "Über die Darstellung eines krystallisierten pflanzlichen Tokokinins (Thelykinins) und seine Identifizierung mit dem α -Follikel-hormon", *Zeitschrift für physiologische Chemie*, ccxviii (1933), pp. 104-12. Butenandt received the Nobel prize for chemistry in 1939.

⁷ In 1965 and 1966, however, experiments succeeded in confirming Butenandt and Jacobi's findings. See Erich Heftmann, Shui-Tze Ko and Raymond D. Bennett, "Identification of Estrone in Pomegranate Seeds", *Phytochemistry*, v (1966), p. 1337; Raymond D. Bennett, Shui-Tze Ko and Erich Heftmann, "Isolation of Estrone and Cholesterol from the Date Palm, *Phoenix Dactylifera* L.", *Phytochemistry*, v (1966), pp. 231-5.

⁸ See John R. Lacey, Lynn F. James and Robert E. Short, *The Ecology and Economic Impact of Poisonous Plants on Livestock Production* (Boulder, Colo., and London, 1988), esp. p. 9.

⁹ H. W. Bennetts, E. J. Underwood and F. L. Shier, "A Specific Breeding Problem of Sheep on Subterranean Clover Pastures in Western Australia", *Australian Veterinary Jl.*, xxii (1946), pp. 2-12. All isoflavonoids are oestrogenic.

¹⁰ D. B. Bounds and G. S. Pope, "Light-Absorption and Chemical Properties of Miroestrol, the Oestrogenic Substance of *Pueraria Mirifica*", *Jl. Chemical Soc.* (1960), pp. 3696-705; see also J. B. Harborne, *Introduction to Ecological Biochemistry*, 2nd edn. (London, 1982), p. 102.

¹¹ For references to such studies, see below, p. 31 n. 127.

Finally, other laboratory and clinical studies of the effect of plant substances on animal and human fertility frequently appear in Indian and Chinese medical and pharmaceutical journals. Here specific traditional crude drugs are scientifically tested as alternative sources for the now standard oestrogen-progesterone pills.

II

CONTRACEPTIVES AND EARLY-TERM ABORTIFACIENTS

A variety of plant substances have been used as oral contraceptives, and an even larger number as early-term abortifacients. Although ancient and medieval people distinguished between contraception and abortion, the difference is not always clear, as we shall observe in the cases of ferula and the pomegranate. A few other representative plants are also briefly discussed in this section.¹²

1) *Ferula*

Ferula is a genus of plants, commonly known as the giant fennel. The plant has yellow flowers and grows to the height of a small tree, although it is a scrub. It is found in semi-arid regions, on hillsides and stony slopes. The fragrant pith of the dry stems and the juice from its roots were popular medicines.

In antiquity, ferula was valued both as a contraceptive and as an early-term abortifacient. The ancients knew the difference. Soranus, a writer on gynaecology during the time of Trajan (A.D. 98-117) and Hadrian (A.D. 117-38), made the distinction as follows: "A contraceptive differs from an abortive (*Atokion de phthorion diapherei*), for the first does not let conception take place, while the latter destroys what has been conceived. Let us therefore call the one 'abortive (*phthorion*)' and the other 'contraceptive (*atokion*)' . . . it is safer to prevent conception from taking place than to destroy the foetus".¹³

The first two oral prescriptions mentioned by Soranus use two plants, *silphion* and *opopanax*, both possibly species of ferula.¹⁴

¹² These are only a selection of the plant-based drugs which I will discuss at greater length in a book: John M. Riddle, *A History of Oral Contraceptives and Early-Stage Abortifacients* (Harvard Univ. Press, forthcoming 1992; provisional title).

¹³ Soranus, *Gynaecology*, i.60 (trans. Oswei Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, Baltimore, 1956, pp. 62-3). For the Greek text, see Soranus, *Gynaeciorum libri iv*, ed. Johannes Ilberg (Corpus Medicorum Graecorum [hereafter C.M.G.], iv, Leipzig and Berlin, 1927); *Sorani Gynaeciorum*, ed. Valentin Rose (Bibl. Script. Graec. et Roman. Teubner. [hereafter Teubner.], Leipzig, 1882); Soranus, *Maladies des femmes*, ed. Paul Burguière, Danielle Gourevitch and Yves Malinas (Paris, 1988).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, i.63.

Opopanax was to be administered with *silphion*, and is our *Ferula opopanax* Spr., or — in some confused modern taxonomy — the closely related *Pastinica opopanax* L.¹⁵ In the nineteenth century, a drug obtained from opopanax was thought to have had the same effects as the drugs from other species of *ferula*.¹⁶ *Silphion* is a now extinct species of the same genus, which seems to have been collected out of existence.¹⁷ The very high price of *silphion* was remarked in 424 B.C. by Aristophanes — “Don’t you remember when a stalk of *silphion* sold so cheap”? — and its scarcity was commented on as early as the first century A.D. by Pliny the Elder.¹⁸ Greek, Roman and medieval medical sources prescribed several species of *ferula* for anti-fertility effects: among the plants are *Ferula assa-foetida* L. (whose roots have a pronounced, foul smell resembling that of faeces — unforgettable and unmistakable!), *Ferula communis* L. (a source of the drug ammoniacum), *Ferula galbaniflua* Boiss. and Buhse (a source of the drug galbanum), *Ferula tingitana* L. (a source of ammoniacum) and *Ferula persica* Willd. (a source of sagapenum gum). The apparent reason for the extinction of *silphion* is that it was prized more highly than the related species, combined with the fact that ancient attempts to cultivate it were unsuccessful.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Des Pedanios Dioskurides aus Anazarbos Arzneimittellehre in fünf Büchern*, ed. Julius Berendes (Stuttgart, 1902), p. 297 n. 9; the same plant is classified by D. J. Mabberley, *The Plant Book* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 413, as *Opopanax chironium*, but it is closely related to *ferula*. From the descriptions of *F. opopanax* Spr./*O. chironium* (L.) Koch, the plant closely resembles *Ferula palmyrensis* Post and Beauverd, in *Index Kewensis plantarum phanerogamarum*, suppl. vol. (Oxford, 1938), p. 114, and I suspect that Berendes’s and Mabberley’s plants may be *F. palmyrensis*, the plant mentioned by Soranus. Whether they are or not does not affect the important point, which is that their chemistry would be similar, albeit not precisely the same.

¹⁶ Charles Pickering, *Chronological History of Plants: Man’s Record of His Own Existence Illustrated through Their Names, Uses and Companionship* (Boston, 1879), p. 158; Friedrich A. Flückiger and Daniel Hanbury, *Pharmacographia: A History of the Principal Drugs of Vegetable Origin, Met with in Great Britain and British India*, 2nd edn. (London, 1879), p. 327.

¹⁷ Alfred C. Andrews, “The Silphium of the Ancients: A Lesson in Crop Control”, *Isis*, xxxiii (1941-2), pp. 235-6.

¹⁸ Aristophanes, *Knights*, 893-4, trans. B. B. Rogers, *Aristophanes*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1927), i, p. 213; Pliny, *Natural History*, xix.15.39-41; see also Chalmers L. Gemmill, “Silphium”, *Bull. Hist. Medicine*, xl (1966), pp. 295-313; John Scarborough, *Pharmacy’s Ancient Heritage: Theophrastus, Nicander, and Dioscorides* (Lexington, Ky., 1984), p. 76, proposing that the plant be called *Ferula cyrenaica* Diosc. in honour of Dioscorides.

¹⁹ Theophrastus, *De historia et causis plantarum*, vi.3.2.5 (ed. and trans. Arthur Hort, *Enquiry into Plants and Minor Works on Odours and Weather Signs*, 2 vols., London, 1916, ii, p. 15).

A study carried out in 1963 confirmed that assafoetida is a contraceptive agent²⁰ as well as an abortifacient emmenagogue in humans.²¹ (An emmenagogue is an agent that stimulates the menstrual function: thus, if there is a pregnancy, an emmenagogue will also cause an abortion.) Ferujol, the active substance in ferula, has been isolated experimentally. In animal tests it was nearly 100 per cent effective in preventing pregnancy when administered to adult rats within three days of coitus at a low dose of 0.6 mg./kg. body weight.²²

Some early medical writers refer to one or more species of ferula as being either emmenagogues or abortifacients, but do not mention contraception. Dioscorides (c. A.D. 40-80) noted that *silphion* induced menstruation, but discussing other species of the same genus he remarked that the plants caused abortion. Galen (A.D. 129-210 or later) and Aetius of Amida (c. A.D. 502-75) made similar observations.²³ What are we to make of this apparent confusion between abortion and contraception?

Even though some of the ancients were semantically correct, there appear to be functional complications. An abortifacient is an agent that terminates pregnancy; in modern medicine the agents producing this action are called ecbolics, oxytocics and

²⁰ Norman R. Farnsworth *et al.*, "Potential Value of Plants as Sources of New Antifertility Agents: I", *Jl. Pharmaceutical Sciences*, lxiv (1975), pp. 554, 590. The medicine enjoys a British and an Indian patent (British pat. 1,025,372 [Cl.A 61k], 6 Apr. 1956; Indian appl., 25 July 1963). In the human experiment the following were taken in equal doses daily for twenty-two days while abstaining from sexual coitus: 4 drams of the active principle from *Empbelia ribes*; 4 drams, *Piper longum*; 2 drams, assafoetida (ferula); and 4 drams of borax (soda). Ferula plants contain both ferulic acid and valeric acid. One species, *Ferula moshchata* Kozo-Polj., is employed in folk medicine in Central Asia: see Keller, *Abortiva*, p. 174.

²¹ Farnsworth *et al.*, "New Antifertility Agents: I", p. 576; J. C. Saha, E. C. Savini and S. Kasinathan, "Ecobolic Properties of Indian Medicinal Plants", *Indian Jl. Medical Research*, il (1961), p. 136; M. M. Singh *et al.*, "Contraceptive Efficacy and Hormonal Profile of Ferujol: A New Coumarin from *Ferula jaeschkeana*", *Planta medica*, li (1985), pp. 268-70, reporting that pregnancy is prevented when an extract of *Ferula jaeschkeana* is given to female rats 1-5 days after coitus.

²² Singh *et al.*, "Contraceptive Efficacy . . . of Ferujol", pp. 268-70. The statistical reduction was significant: there was less than 1 per cent chance of pregnancy. See also Farnsworth *et al.*, "New Antifertility Agents: I", p. 576; James A. Duke, *C.R.C. Handbook of Medicinal Herbs* (Boca Raton, 1985), pp. 194-5.

²³ Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, iii.48, 80, 81, 83, 84 (ed. Max Wellmann, 3 vols., Berlin, 1906-14; repr. Berlin, 1958); Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus*, viii.16.4 (ed. C. G. Kühn, *Claudii Galenii opera omnia* [hereafter *Opera omnia*], 20 vols., Leipzig, 1821-33; repr. Hildesheim, 1964, xii, p. 95); Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum*, xvi.18 (ed. Skévos Zervós, *Peri tōn en mētrai pathōn*, Leipzig, 1901).

emmenagogues. As already noted, emmenagogues are agents that provoke menstruation whether or not an embryo is present, but since these menstrual agents are not clearly described as such in historical records, historians have not recognized them as such, let alone as abortifacients. The first perceptible evidence of pregnancy is an interruption of the menstrual cycle. But amenorrhoea (the absence or suppression of menstruation) can also be caused by a variety of conditions including febrile and chronic diseases, malnutrition and mental depression. Moreover it is fairly common in conditions other than pregnancy. A physician or a herbalist could not know the aetiology of amenorrhoea reported by a patient within, say, the first months of pregnancy without the sort of tests (now available) which were not known to an ancient or medieval physician. It is difficult to distinguish between idiopathic (genuine) amenorrhoea and early pregnancy, especially if the physician has not conducted a careful case history with a patient who is completely honest. In the mid-nineteenth century, after abortion became a criminal offence in many Western countries (in England in 1803), Charles Meigs, M.D., advised that "The stupidest thing a physician can do, is to be misled by complaints to the administering of drugs and medicines, which may bring on, not the menses, but an abortion, or a premature labor".²⁴ For this reason traditional emmenagogues were dropped from "official" pharmacy in many countries.

For the purposes of this paper, I shall use the term "abortifacient" as embracing all forms of pregnancy termination that occur even shortly after implantation. Although some religious and ethical doctrines stress the critical dividing-line as the instant in which fertilization takes place, this is not used as the dividing-line in modern medicine, because any agent that interferes with the ovary transport, pre- or post-coitum, and prevents or impairs implantation, is none the less a contraceptive.²⁵

Therefore — to answer the question about the ancients' interchanging terms for contraceptives and abortifacients — there appear to be grounds for the confusion. Aetius of Amida and Paul

²⁴ Charles D. Meigs, *Females and Their Diseases* (Philadelphia, 1848), p. 405.

²⁵ For example, Anthony A. Elujoba, Stella O. Olagbende and Simeon K. Adesina, "Antiimplantation Activity of the Fruit of *Lagenaria Breviflora* Robert", *Jl. Ethnopharmacology*, xiii (1985), pp. 281-8, reports that this plant is used as an abortifacient in Nigeria, but is actually an anti-implantation agent: 5g./kg. of the fruit pulp yielded 100 per cent activity: that is to say, all who took this amount aborted/failed to conceive.

of Aegina (seventh century) both noted a series of steps that a woman should take to avoid pregnancy, namely diets, bathing regimens, exercises and oral and applied drugs — and, should the menstrual cycle be delayed, different regimens and other, stronger drugs.²⁶ The words for emmenagogues and abortifacients were also interchangeable. For example, the words for abortifacients in the Greek text of Oribasius (*fl.* A.D. 385) were translated into Latin as emmenagogues.²⁷ The Latin version of Dioscorides, made in or around the sixth century, translates Dioscorides' phrase "drives out the menses" (*agōgas emmenōn*) as "it causes an abortion" (*abortum facit*).²⁸ In part this confusion of terms may reflect increased medieval sensitivity to the issue of abortion, but this was not universal, since throughout the Middle Ages there were medical writers giving prescriptions explicitly for birth-control.

2) *Pomegranate, an Oral Contraceptive and Vaginal Suppository*

An examination of Soranus' vaginal suppositories provides a background for a closer look at oral contraceptives. Soranus gave six recipes for vaginal suppositories to be taken after the cessation of menstruation, five of which use the peel or rind of a pomegranate.²⁹ Pomegranate (*Punica granatum* L.) was prescribed in other classical and medieval medical sources. In Greek mythology, moreover, Proserpine ate pomegranate seeds, contrary to Zeus' order, thus preventing her return to earth for more than part of the year, along with the return of fertility. For as many seeds as she ate, she was destined to stay that many months in the Underworld.³⁰ Pomegranate is also recognized as an abortifacient in ancient Indian literature and in modern folk medicine.³¹

²⁶ Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum*, xvi.16-18; Paul of Aegina, *Epitomae medicae*, iii.60.12, 29-34 (ed. J. L. Heilberg, 2 vols., C.M.G., ix, Leipzig, 1921).

²⁷ Oribasius, *Synopsis*, ii.53 (ed. Charles Daremberg and C. Bussemaker, *Oeuvres d'Oribase*, 6 vols., Paris, 1851-76; repr. Amsterdam, 1962, v, p. 68); *ibid.* (ed. Johannes Raeder, 5 vols., C.M.G., vi, Leipzig, 1926, iii, p. 43); cf. *Oribasius Latinus*, ed. Henning Mørland (Symbolae Osloensis, fasc., suppl., x, Oslo, 1940), pp. 75, 118, 148.

²⁸ Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, iii.123.1.5; cf. bk. 3 of the old Latin translation, in "Dioscorides Longobardis (Cod. Lat. Monacensis 337)", ed. Hermann Stadler, *Römanische Forschungen*, x (1898), p. 432.

²⁹ Soranus, *Gynaecology*, i.62.

³⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, v.523-50; W. Smith (ed.), *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, 3 vols. (London, 1849), iii, p. 204.

³¹ Saha, Savini and Kasinathan, "Ecobolic Properties of Indian Medicinal Plants", p. 140; John Mitchell Watt and M. G. Breyer-Brandwijk, *The Medicinal and Poisonous*

This is the plant which Butenandt and Jacobi identified as a contraceptive in the 1930s, an observation confirmed by more recent scientific studies.³² In laboratory experiments, when paired with males not treated with the plant, female rats fed pomegranate experienced 72 per cent less pregnancies than the control group. In similar tests with guinea pigs none became pregnant. Forty days after the withdrawal of the drug the fertility of both rats and guinea pigs was back to normal.³³ Another laboratory test, on a pomegranate extract not containing the root, resulted in a 70 to 90 per cent inhibition of pregnancy in rats. The scientists conducting the investigation concluded that different extraction methods and morphological plant loci (such as roots, stem or flower) may influence the results,³⁴ which holds true as a generalization about all herbal substances regardless of how they are administered or applied.

Despite pomegranate's association with limiting fertility, however, it appears to have been seldom used in classical and medieval medicine, to judge from the small number of references to it in medical works and the scarcity of anecdotal literary sources. There is no citation of its use as an oral contraceptive, but only as a suppository, the effectiveness of which is not clearly known. For instance, pomegranate is not mentioned in the various works

(n. 31 cont.)

Plants of Southern and Eastern Africa, 2nd edn. (London, 1962), pp. 875-6, noting anti-fertility uses in Mauritius and Sumatra.

³² Heftmann, Ko and Bennett, "Identification of Estrone", pp. 1337-9; P. D. G. Dean, D. Exley and T. W. Goodwin, "Steroid Oestrogens in Plants: Re-estimation of Oestrone in Pomegranate Seeds", *Phytochemistry*, x (1971), pp. 2215-16, reporting smaller amounts of oestrogens than those found by Heftmann, Ko and Bennett, and concluding that there may be seasonal variations; Norman R. Farnsworth *et al.*, "Potential Value of Plants as Sources of New Antifertility Agents: II", *Jl. Pharmaceutical Sciences*, lxiv (1975), p. 718. Another animal test demonstrates that pomegranate prevents fertilization at a 50 per cent rate in rats: Anand O. Prakash, "Potentialities of Some Indigenous Plants for Antifertility Activity", *Internat. Jl. Crude Drug Research*, xxiv (1986), p. 23.

³³ M. L. Gujral, D. R. Varma and K. N. Sareen, "Oral Contraceptives: Part 1: Preliminary Observations on the Antifertility Effect of Some Indigenous Drugs", *Indian Jl. Medical Research*, xlviii (1960), p. 50. Another experiment, using the isolated uterus of an albino rat to test compounds, found a "moderate increase in amplitude and frequency of contractions without appreciated alteration in tone" with pomegranate: B. N. Dhawan and P. N. Saxena, "Evaluation of Some Indigenous Drugs for Stimulant Effect on the Rat Uterus: A Preliminary Report", *Indian Jl. Medical Research*, xli (1958), p. 811.

³⁴ A. O. Prakash *et al.*, "Anti-Implantation Activity of Some Indigenous Plants in Rats", *Acta Europae fertilitatis*, xvi (1985), p. 447.

of the Hippocratic Corpus as an anti-fertility agent; nor does it appear in this capacity in the works of antiquity's foremost authority on drugs, Dioscorides. Again, it is absent from the works of Galen; it is, however, prescribed by Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, c. 980-1037) as a pre- and post-coital suppository together with alum, while the Latin translation appears to prescribe oral administration without the alum.³⁵ Soranus stated that suppositories (which is how he classified pomegranate) were more dangerous than oral contraceptives.³⁶ Contrary to popular opinion, the ancient Hippocratic Oath did not prohibit abortions; the oath prohibited "vaginal suppositories" presumably because of the ulcerations that they were said to cause.³⁷ Soranus and other medical authorities recognized what folk medicine must have learned from experience: that while pomegranate was effective, there were other substances that prevented pregnancy which were more effective, easier to administer and less dangerous.

3) *Juniper*

"Gossip records a miracle", states Pliny the Elder: "that to rub it [crushed juniper berries] all over the male part before coitus prevents conception".³⁸ Dioscorides adds that crushed juniper berries (probably *Juniperus communis* L.) could be placed on the vulva prior to coitus as a contraceptive.³⁹ Galen refers to two species of juniper as being both a "contraceptive drug" (*atokion esti pharmakon*) and an abortifacient (the verb *ekballei*, "it aborts"

³⁵ Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Liber canonis*, ii.2.578 (trans. Gerard of Cremona, Venice, 1507; fac. repr. Hildesheim, 1964, fo. 146v). The Arabic text is discussed in B. F. Musallam, *Sex and Society in Islam: Birth Control before the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 72, 84, *passim*.

³⁶ Soranus, *Gynaecology*, i.61-3. Specifically, he said that the suppositories were styptic, clogging, cooling and caused ulcerations.

³⁷ As translated by Ludwig Edelstein, "The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation and Interpretation", in *Ancient Medicine: Selected Papers of Ludwig Edelstein*, ed. O. and C. L. Temkin (Baltimore, 1967), p. 6, it states: "Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy". The critical Greek words here are *pepson phthorion*, which mean "expulsive (or abortive) pessary/suppository". For a discussion, see Charles Lichtenthæler, *Der Eid des Hippokrates: Ursprung und Bedeutung* (Cologne, 1984), pp. 144-52. A Muslim writer, Abu al-Hasan al-Tabib, in explaining why abortions were important if the mother's life was in danger, commented that "This is the reason Hippocrates demands the use of abortive drugs before childbirth": quoted in Musallam, *Sex and Society in Islam*, p. 70.

³⁸ Pliny, *Natural History*, xxiv.11.18, trans. from the edition by W. H. J. Jones, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., and Boston, 1980), vii, p. 17. Pliny's *cedrus* was probably *Juniperus excelsa* Bieb.

³⁹ Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, i.77.2.7.

or "it expels").⁴⁰ More recently, German women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took savin, from *Juniperus sabina* L., as an abortifacient.⁴¹ Pliny's and Dioscorides' prescriptions were for vaginal insertion, but other sources are unclear as to the means of administration.

In an experiment the results of which were published in 1986, 200 mg. of an extract of juniper root (*Juniperus communis* L.) were administered orally to laboratory rats with the result of 60 per cent effectiveness in preventing implantation,⁴² thus confirming it to be an oral contraceptive (as I classify anti-implantation agents following the medical convention outlined above). Juniper berries were a part of our pharmacopoeia until the last century, as a uterine stimulant. They act as an emmenagogue affecting the menstrual cycle, oils from the leaves are shown by *in vitro* and *in vivo* tests in animals to be uterine stimulants. In experiments on the isolated human uterus and Fallopian tubes, the oils have caused relaxation and inhibited movement to an extent that could lead to an abortion. In fact, there are medically attested cases of abortion induced by juniper toxins.⁴³ Thus, to judge from what we know now, juniper may have been administered orally or applied externally with both contraceptive and abortifacient results, just as Galen and other classical and medieval medical authorities suggested.

4) Rue

Rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.) is a hardy evergreen perennial, a somewhat scrubby plant about eighty centimetres high, with a lax-branched cluster of yellow to yellowish-green flowers. In the garden rue emits a powerful, disagreeable odour. It contains philocarpine, a substance given to horses to induce an abortion.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum*, vi.2.15 (ed. Kühn, xi, p. 854). Galen's *brathu* is probably *Juniperus sabina*.

⁴¹ James Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany, 1871-1933* (London, 1988), pp. 17-18 *passim*; see also V. J. Brøndegaard, "Der Sadebaum als Abortivum", *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und Naturwissenschaften*, xlviii (1964), pp. 331-51.

⁴² Prakash, "Potentialities of Some Indigenous Plants", p. 23; see also Prakash *et al.*, "Anti-Implantation Activity", pp. 441, 447.

⁴³ G. Fredrichs, G. Arends and H. Zörnig, *Hager's Handbuch der pharmazeutischen Praxis*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1949 [c. 1944]), i, p. 1572; Duke, *C.R.C. Handbook of Medicinal Herbs*, p. 256.

⁴⁴ Farnsworth *et al.*, "New Antifertility Agents: I", p. 574, based on findings from ten separate studies; the veterinary use of philocarpine is described in *The Merck's Index*, 7th edn., ed. P. G. Stecher (Rahway, 1960), p. 818; Henry de Laszlo and Paul S. Henshaw, "Plant Materials Used by Primitive Peoples to Affect Fertility", *Science*, cxix (1954), p. 629.

This plant is a traditional abortifacient among the Hispanic people in New Mexico,⁴⁵ and is used as a tea for abortive purposes throughout Latin America. The report carrying this latter observation also describes experiments on rats that indicate abortifacient activity, but suggests that the "clearest effect is a contraceptive one" in preventing implantation.⁴⁶ Modern Chinese, Latin American and Indian medical authorities recognize rue's abortifacient quality,⁴⁷ with one manual warning that pregnant women should avoid it because of its emmenagogic properties.⁴⁸ Chinese scientists have studied the active substance in a related species, *Murraya paniculata*/var. *M. sapientum* L., in the same family (*Rutaceae*), called *yuehchukene*. This substance is 100 per cent active in preventing pregnancies in rats when administered orally at 2 mg./kg. during the first six days of pregnancy. A single dose at 3 mg./kg. is 100 per cent effective on the first day after coitus. It looks promisingly potent as a future post-coital interceptor.⁴⁹

In his *Herball*, John Gerard (1545-1612) said that rue ought "not be admitted to meat or medicine".⁵⁰ Just the same, rue was important to medicine. As with pomegranate, Soranus named rue as an oral contraceptive as well as a vaginal suppository.⁵¹ From the modern evidence it is clear that Soranus' prescription would have had an anti-fertility effect as both a contraceptive and an abortifacient. In sharp contrast to Gerard, Pliny the Elder thought that "rue is among our principal medicines".⁵² Pliny said that rue promoted menstruation, brought away the afterbirth and expelled a dead foetus (or embryo), a common circumlocution

⁴⁵ George A. Conway and John C. Slocumb, "Plants Used as Abortifacients and Emmenagogues by Spanish New Mexicans", *Jl. Ethnopharmacology*, i (1979), pp. 247-8.

⁴⁶ Martha O. Guerra and Amaury T. L. Andrade, "Contraceptive Effects of Native Plants in Rats", *Contraception*, xviii (1978), pp. 191-9, esp. p. 198.

⁴⁷ Duke, *C.R.C. Handbook of Medicinal Herbs*, p. 417; M. Terra, *The Way of Herbs* (Santa Cruz, 1980), p. 113; A. Y. Leung, *Encyclopedia of Common Natural Ingredients Used in Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics* (New York, 1980), p. 409; B. S. Malhi and V. P. Trivedi, "Vegetable Antifertility Drugs of India", *Quart. Jl. Crude Drug Research*, xii (1972), p. 1927.

⁴⁸ Terra, *Way of Herbs*, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Yun Cheung Kong, Jing-Xi Xie and Paul Pui-Hay But, "Fertility Regulating Agents from Traditional Chinese Medicines", *Jl. Ethnopharmacology*, xv (1986), p. 4.

⁵⁰ John Gerard, *The Herball: or Generall Historie of Plants* (London, 1636; repr. New York, 1985), p. 268.

⁵¹ Soranus, *Gynaecology*, i.63.

⁵² Pliny, *Natural History*, xx.51.131.

for abortion.⁵³ He contended, just like the modern manual, that "Pregnant women must take care to exclude rue from their diet, for I find that the foetus [or embryo] is killed by it".⁵⁴ Galen offered a number of anti-fertility uses for rue,⁵⁵ among them an oral-route prescription named after Orbanos.⁵⁶

Gargilius Martialis, a retired soldier in North Africa during the third century A.D., described the medical knowledge appropriate to an estate-owner.⁵⁷ He gave scant attention to female problems: there is only one mention of contraceptives and abortifacients. Gargilius valued rue, but concluded with a point emphasizing the hazards which might attend its unwitting use by ignorant women: "Some very foolishly declare the damage rue causes: that it inhibits, debilitates the generative seed, and kills embryos in the womb. By itself it does not bring these results; they are due to the people who employ it without considering its strength, its dosage, or the circumstances. Therefore a man [person] of judgement employs it in moderation so that it may not become a poison, rather than a remedy".⁵⁸

Even after Christianity became dominant, late Roman and early Byzantine medical writers continued to relate information about rue's anti-fertility properties. Oribasius called rue an emmenagogue, but the Latin translation explicitly said abortifacient.⁵⁹

⁵³ *Ibid.*, xx.51.139. Here, as throughout when dealing with sources, I am not making the distinction between embryo and foetus made by modern medicine. Johannes Fischer, *Die Gynäkologie bei Dioskurides und Plinius* (Vienna, 1927), pp. 6-7, observes that Dioscorides used the phrase or one similar to "it aborts a dead foetus" (*ta tethnēkota embrua ektinassei . . . ekballei*): see other examples in Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, iii.32.1.6, iii.32.83.2.1, iii.32.112.2.6-7. In i.78.2.8, the wording is "it kills the foetus" (*embrua phtheiron kai emmēna kinoun*); see also *ibid.*, ii.155.1.3-4. Pliny uses the Latin equivalents of "expelling a foetus" (*embrua kinei . . . agei*, etc.), phrases such as "it drives out also a dead birth" (*partus quoque emortuos pellit*, *Natural History*, xx.34.86), and "it ejects a faulty birth" (*defunctos partus eicit*, *ibid.*, xx.54.154).

⁵⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, xx.51.143, trans. Jones, vi, pp. 82, 84.

⁵⁵ Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum*, v.23 (ed. Kühn, xi, p. 777), viii.18 (xii, p. 101); Galen, *De remediis parabilibus*, ii.18-22 (ed. C. G. Kühn, *Opera omnia*, xiv, pp. 480-2); Galen, *De antidotis*, ii.1 (ed. C. G. Kühn, *Opera omnia*, xiv, pp. 114-15), ii.9 (pp. 152-3).

⁵⁶ "Antidotos ē Orbanou . . . pros to ta entos brephē ekballein": Galen, *De antidotis*, ii.1 (ed. Kühn, xiv, pp. 109-11).

⁵⁷ John M. Riddle, "Gargilius Martialis as a Medical Writer", *Jl. Hist. Medicine and Allied Science*, xxxix (1984), pp. 408-29.

⁵⁸ Gargilius Martialis, *Medicinae ex oleribus et pomis*, iii (ed. Valentin Rose, *Plinii Secundi quae fertur una cum Gargilii Martialis medicina*, Teubner., Leipzig, 1875, p. 137); *Materia Medica of Gargilius Martialis*, trans. Ruth Melicent Tapper (Madison, Wis., 1908), p. 26 (available via University Microfilms International).

⁵⁹ Above, p. 11 n. 27.

Theodorus Priscianus (*fl.* A.D. 367-83) and Pseudo-Galen's treatise *Ad Paternianum* both said that rue was given to induce an abortion.⁶⁰ Paul of Aegina discussed rue in greater detail, seemingly copying from no single source. In discussing gynaecology, Paul outlined a regimen for delayed menstruation or amenorrhoea, since this was preferable, he said, to drugs as a first therapeutic measure. This regimen included exercises and a special diet consisting of a variety of seafood. If the condition persisted, however, for three to four days the woman was advised to drink a soup of shellfish boiled with leeks, pepper and rue. If this failed Paul suggested a vaginal suppository, again containing rue.⁶¹ It should be noted that in his section on pharmacy, however, Paul described rue as a calefacient (warming medicine) and desiccant, and said that it curbed sexual desire: he did not explicitly state that rue was an anti-fertility agent.⁶² Guided by Hippocratic theory, however, a physician would nevertheless know that a dessicant quality was needed to dry the sperm in an anti-fertility treatment. From medical writings, such as this one by Paul, even when anti-fertility is not explicitly specified, the physician would have known how to apply the agents according to their qualities — assuming proper training and competency, of course.

Islamic medical writers, such as Rāzi (Rhazes, *c.* 865-925) and Ibn Sīnā, recommended rue as a contraceptive and abortifacient.⁶³ When Gerard of Cremona (*c.* 1114-87) translated Ibn Sīnā into Latin, he nevertheless made no concessions to the church's position on reproduction, faithfully translating the discussions and recipes for contraception and abortion.⁶⁴ In the treatise *On Degrees* (Latin translation by Constantine the African, eleventh century), drugs are prescribed according to the degree of intensity of their pharmaceutical actions, beginning with weak drugs (one degree of activity) and leading up to extremely strong and dangerous

⁶⁰ Theodorus Priscianus, *Euporiston*, iii., *Gynaecia*, 6. (*De aborsu*), 23-7 (ed. Valentin Rose, Teubner., Leipzig, 1894); Pseudo-Galen, *Liber de simplicibus medicaminibus ad Paternianum*, in *Galenus omnia quae extant*, 11 vols. in 5 (Venice, 1556), iii, pt. 2, fo. 91^v.

⁶¹ Paul of Aegina, *Epitomae medicae*, iii.61.5.1-5 (ed. Heilberg, i, pp. 275-6).

⁶² *Ibid.*, vii.3, s.v. *reganon* (ed. Heilberg, ii, p. 251, ll. 23-7).

⁶³ Musallam, *Sex and Society in Islam*, pp. 67-70, 84, 146-7.

⁶⁴ Ibn Sīnā, *Liber canonis*, trans. Gerard of Cremona, iii.21.8-14, on abortion (ch. 12 entitled "De regimine abortus et extractione fetus mortui"); iii.21.17, on ways to avoid pregnancy which include a suppository with elephant dung. Another way in which contraceptive and abortifacient information was related can be seen in *ibid.*, ii.2, on simple drugs: for example, rue in ch. 578.

drugs which exhibit four degrees of activity. Rue, which displays the strongest of these degrees of intensity, was "drunk with oxymelle to dry out the sperm and kill the desire for intercourse . . . [and it] expels the menstrea".⁶⁵ This underlines the point about qualities made when discussing Paul of Aegina. In the seventeenth century, moreover, the action of anti-fertility agents could be expressed as "drying" the seed "without adversely affecting lust". William Langham in his *The Garden of Health* (1598) states, for instance, that "Rue eaten a certain space, drieth up natural seede in man", and also that "teeming women may not eate Rue for hindering their conception".⁶⁶

Although rue continues to be employed as an anti-fertility agent in folk medicine, its use in Western medicine was discontinued by the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

5) Pennyroyal

Aristophanes' play *Peace* was first produced in 421 B.C. It is a comedy about what was a serious subject for the Athenians who, despite the war with the Spartans, probably packed the theatre, where they heard Hermes tell Trigaius, in need of a companion: "Then on these terms I'll give you Harvesthome/ To be your bride and partner in your fields. Take her to wife, and propagate young vines". Trigaius replies: "O Harvesthome! come here and let me kiss you. But, Hermes, won't it hurt me if I make too free with fruits of Harvesthome at first?". Hermes reassures him: "Not if you add a dose of pennyroyal".⁶⁸

Commenting on this exchange, a Byzantine scholiast explained that pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium* L.) was used in a medicinal draught that counteracted the effects of eating too much fruit.⁶⁹ The scholiast was not too far out. Pennyroyal was used both as a contraceptive and an abortifacient, as Aristophanes' audience

⁶⁵ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, MS. lat. 267, c. xiv, Constantine the African, *De gradibus*, fo. 128^v; also in *Constantini Africani opera* (Basle, 1536), p. 386.

⁶⁶ William Langham, *The Garden of Health* (London, 1598), p. 545; see also p. 547: "It is not good . . . for women with childe". For a discussion, see Angus McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals: The Perception of Fertility in England from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York, 1984), pp. 73-4.

⁶⁷ Jonathan Pereira, *The Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1854), ii, p. 877.

⁶⁸ Aristophanes, *Peace*, 706-12, trans. B. B. Rogers, *Aristophanes*, ii, pp. 64-5.

⁶⁹ *Scholia in Aristophanes*, ii, *Pacem*, ed. D. Holwerda (Groningen, 1982), p. 110, scholia 712a; cf. *Scholia Aristophanica*, ed. William G. Rutherford, 3 vols. (London, 1896), ii, p. 111.

knew — otherwise no laughter. Again, in the play *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes produced a *double entendre* when a woman, who was not pregnant (unlike the Athenian Lysistrata), arrived from Boeotia: “A very lovely land,/ Well cropped, and trimmed, and spruced with pennyroyal”.⁷⁰

Dioscorides said that pennyroyal was an abortifacient.⁷¹ A late Roman writer, Quintus Serenus (d. A.D. 212), observed that when a pregnancy was less than a month old and the foetus (embryo) was weak, one should “rush into the bedroom” to administer pennyroyal in tepid water to the woman.⁷² Other references in classical sources confirm that pennyroyal was used in anti-fertility treatments.⁷³ Pennyroyal is also recommended in medieval sources as an emmenagogue and/or abortifacient.⁷⁴ In the sixteenth century, Langham wrote that the herb, consumed after being soaked in wine, would “provoke the termes and . . . bring forth . . . dead fruited”;⁷⁵ while two recent studies of birth-control, one on early modern England, the other on late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Germany, report numerous instances of women taking the same plants as their classical and medieval counterparts.⁷⁶

Modern science again endorses our ancestors’ practice. Pennyroyal is used in Europe as an emmenagogue and, in 1978, a young woman in Colorado died as a result of taking pennyroyal *oil* to induce an abortion.⁷⁷ The plant cannot be legally sold as a drug in

⁷⁰ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 87-9, trans. B. B. Rogers, *Aristophanes*, iii, pp. 14-15.

⁷¹ Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, 3.31.1.2.

⁷² Quintus Serenus Sammonicus, *Liber medicinalis*, xxxii (ed. R. Pépin, Paris, 1950, p. 34). The text is corrupt at this point: see the edition by Frederic Vollmer, *Quinti Sereni liber medicinalis* (Corpus Medicorum Latinorum [hereafter C.M.L.], ii, fasc. iii, Leipzig, 1916), p. 31. Pépin’s text reads: “At qui olim menses minus octo moratus in aluo est/ Inrumpit thalamos et nexus soluit inertes/ Puleium [pennyroyal] ex acido bene conuenit imbre tepenti/ Cuius opem veram casus mihi saepe probarunt”. Pépin translates “nexus soluit inertes” as “it loosens the bonds” (*rompt ses liens relâchés*), but to me the sense points to a “weakened one” (*inertes* = embryo/foetus), which is, as we have seen, a circumlocution to justify abortion.

⁷³ See John Scarborough’s excellent article, “Contraception in Antiquity: The Case of Pennyroyal”, *Wis. Acad. Rev.*, xxxv (1989), pp. 19-25.

⁷⁴ For example, see Pseudo-Apuleius, *Herbarius*, xciii (ed. Ernest Howald and Henry Sigerist, C.M.L., iv, Leipzig, 1927, p. 198); see also the English version of *Herbarius Apulei*, xciv, in *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, ed. Thomas Oswald Cockayne, 3 vols. (London, 1864; repr. 1965), i, p. 286.

⁷⁵ Langham, *Garden of Health*, p. 478.

⁷⁶ McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals*, pp. 73-5; Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany*, pp. 16-19.

⁷⁷ “Fatality and Illness Associated with Consumption of Pennyroyal Oil — Colorado”, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 22 Dec. 1978, pp. 511-13. Three

the United States, but it is employed in modern folk medicine both as an abortifacient and emmenagogue.⁷⁸ It is nevertheless true that a twentieth-century European theatre audience in Berlin or London might miss the joke about pennyroyal which apparently entertained the Athenian theatregoer in the fifth century B.C.

6) *Squirting Cucumber*

The squirting cucumber (*Ecballium elaterium* L.) looks rather like the familiar garden cucumber, but has no tendrils. This perennial plant grows on waste ground, verges and cultivated areas. Its leaves are heart-shaped and rough, and the fruit is ovoid-cylindrical, being four to five centimetres long. Despite Freudian suggestions to the contrary, the English name for this plant derives from the fact that when its fruit dries it squirts out its seeds — its anti-fertility use being just coincidental.

A Hippocratic treatise on women's problems claimed that the squirting cucumber was good as "an abortive suppository for the uterus" (*ekbolion husterōn*), and, the author(s) added, "there is nothing that is better".⁷⁹ Galen and Dioscorides both described the plant as an abortifacient.⁸⁰ Oribasius, Paul of Aegina and Mustio (a gynaecological writer from around the sixth century A.D.) called it an emmenagogue, whereas the later author of a Latin herbal attributed to Apuleius is more specific, saying it is "for an abortion" (*ad abortum*).⁸¹ By the sixteenth century

(n. 77 cont.)

pregnant women allegedly read that pennyroyal induced an abortion and took its oil (marketed as an insect repellent and herbal fragrance). One became ill and, after recovering in hospital, was persuaded to undergo a legally induced abortion; the second case was examined and discharged, and there is no further information concerning the outcome of the pregnancy (which was confirmed). The third, lethal case may have been an attempted suicide. Because pennyroyal oil is highly concentrated, its effect would be much more severe than pennyroyal tea. The unfortunate young woman consumed the equivalent of fifty gallons of pennyroyal tea. This calculation was made by Norman Farnsworth and communicated to me by Mark Blumenthal (3 May 1990).

⁷⁸ Farnsworth *et al.*, "New Antifertility Agents: I", p. 564; Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk, *Medicinal and Poisonous Plants*, p. 523.

⁷⁹ *De mulierum affectibus*, i.78 (ed. E. Littré, *Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*, 12 vols., Paris, 1839-61; repr. Amsterdam, 1982, viii, p. 178, ll. 12-14).

⁸⁰ Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum*, viii.18.15 (ed. Kühn, xii, p. 122); Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, iv.150.7.4-5.

⁸¹ Oribasius, *Euporistes*, ii.1.3 (ed. Charles Daremberg and C. Bussemaker, *Oeuvres d'Oribase*, v, p. 635); Mustio, *Pessaria*, ed. Valentine Rose, *Sorani Gynaeciorum vetus translatio latina* (Teubner, Leipzig, 1882), pp. 123-5; Paul of Aegina, *Epitomae medicae*, vii.3, s.v. *elatērion* (ed. Heilberg, ii, p. 209, ll. 6-7); Pseudo-Apuleius, *Herbarius*, cxiv (ed. Howald and Sigerist, p. 199).

Langham was a little less direct, writing that the herb "expel[s] the termes and dead childe".⁸² Linnaeus even gave the plant a scientific name from the Greek meaning "abortion", "Ecbalium", although the ancient Greek name was *sikus agrios*.

The anti-fertility associations are confirmed by recent animal tests, although they demonstrate contraceptive, not abortifacient, activity. When mice were given daily doses of between 20 and 100 mg./kg. of extracts derived from both the whole plant and the flower alone, they failed to ovulate.⁸³

7) *Queen Anne's Lace*

Queen Anne's lace (sometimes known as daucus or the wild carrot: *Daucus carota* L.), has a reddish, slender and strongly aromatic root with stems about two feet high. Both stem and leaves are covered with coarse hair. According to legend, the tiny red specks in flowers of a white to purple cluster are the blood of Queen Anne spilt when she pricked her finger when making lace. Today, women in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina gather the seeds in the autumn. After coitus, a woman taking a spoonful of the seeds in a glass of water is confident that she will not conceive.⁸⁴ Those few women who today know about Queen Anne's lace are heirs to birth-control knowledge which it seems was once much more widespread.

Scribonius Largus (fl. A.D. 47) was one of the earliest medical writers to discuss Queen Anne's lace, including it in a recipe designed to induce an abortion.⁸⁵ Other ancient writers, such as Galen and Paul of Aegina, also recommended its anti-fertility properties.⁸⁶ The Middle Ages learned of its qualities not only

⁸² Langham, *Garden of Health*, p. 210.

⁸³ Farnsworth *et al.*, "New Antifertility Agents: I", p. 549.

⁸⁴ Personal interview with Mary Reichle, public health nurse in Watauga County, North Carolina, Aug. 1990.

⁸⁵ Scribonius Largus, *Compositiones*, 121 (ed. Sergio Sconocchia, Teubner., Leipzig, 1983, p. 64). Technically the Latin says "after an abortion" (*ex parte abortuue*), but since almost all the recipe's sixteen ingredients (including myrrh, asarum, opopanax and Queen Anne's lace) are abortifacients, I am assuming that either Scribonius simply misunderstood what the women were telling him (or his source) or else that the women misinformed him. There would be no medical grounds for taking the mixture after an abortion, and indeed many good reasons for not doing so!

⁸⁶ As an emmenagogue, see Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum*, vi.4.2-3 (ed. Kühn, xi, pp. 862-3); as an abortifacient, a related species, the death carrot (*thlapsi*), see *ibid.*, vi.8.5 (xi, pp. 886-7). Paul of Aegina, *Epitomae medicae*, iii.61.5.26-8 (ed. Heilberg, i, p. 276), discusses its seeds as emmenagogues, and, in the pharmacy section, gives two listings, *daucus* and *staphulinos*, which are both carrots, and which

through classical texts, but also from contemporary writings. For instance, Constantine the African spoke of its very strong emmenagogic qualities: it exhibited the third degree of intensity.⁸⁷ In a late Salernitan work dating from the second half of the thirteenth century, Petrus Marancius listed Queen Anne's lace as an emmenagogue, but did not include it among abortifacients.⁸⁸

Queen Anne's lace in fact inhibits implantation. An extract of its seeds exhibits oestrogenic activity, meaning that it is a contraceptive.⁸⁹ Following up the observation that rural populations in Rajasthan in India chewed the dried seeds of Queen Anne's lace to reduce fertility, an experiment revealed that dosages varying from 80 mg. to 120 mg. administered to mice between the fourth and sixth days of pregnancy reduced implantation by 100 per cent.⁹⁰ Another study shows that seeds from Queen Anne's lace inhibit "implantation, ovarian growth . . . [and disrupt the] estrous cycle".⁹¹ A recent Chinese laboratory test "clearly" suggests that the seed terpenoids block progesterone synthesis in pregnant animals.⁹² The drug is judged to have promise as a post-coital anti-fertility agent.⁹³

8) *Medieval Contributions to Birth-Control Knowledge*

Medieval scribes modified classical texts to include anti-fertility information that the classical authorities ought to have mentioned,

(n. 86 cont.)

modern authorities consider to be the same plant, *Daucus carota*: *ibid.*, vii.3, s.v. *daucus*, *staphulinos*.

⁸⁷ Constantine the African, *De gradibus*: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS. lat. 267, c. xiv, fo. 123.

⁸⁸ Petrus Marancius, *Tabulae*, ed. Salvatore de Renzi, in *Collectio Salernitana*, 5 vols. (Bologna, 1852), iv, pp. 564-5.

⁸⁹ Farnsworth *et al.*, "New Antifertility Agents: I", p. 554; V. P. Kamboj and B. N. Dhawan, "Research on Plants for Fertility Regulation in India", *Jl. Ethnopharmacology*, vi (1982), p. 207; S. K. Garg and G. P. Garg, "Antifertility Screening of Plants, Part VII: Effect of Five Indigenous Plants on Early Pregnancy in Albino Rats", *Indian Jl. Medical Research*, lix (1970), pp. 302-6.

⁹⁰ M. M. Sharma, Gopal Lal and Dennis Jacob, "Estrogenic and Pregnancy Interceptory Effects of Carrot *Daucus Carota* Seeds", *Indian Jl. Experimental Biology*, xiv (1976), pp. 506-8. From the eighth to the tenth day, however, implantation was not prevented in 61 per cent of the animals. Nevertheless the results show that, as the early sources indicated, the plant is an effective post-coital anti-fertility agent.

⁹¹ B. B. Kaliwal, R. Nazeer Ahamed and M. Appaswamy Rao, "Abortifacient Effect of Carrot Seed (*Daucus Carota*) Extract and its Reversal by Progesterone in Albino Rats", *Comp. Physiology and Ecology*, ix (1984), pp. 70-4.

⁹² Kong, Xie and But, "Fertility Regulating Agents", pp. 18-19.

⁹³ Ashwini Kant, Dennis Jacob and N. K. Lohiya, "The Oestrogenic Efficacy of Carrot (*Daucus carota*) Seeds", *Jl. Advanced Zoology*, vii (1986), pp. 36-41.

but had not included in their treatises. Inexplicably, Dioscorides had failed to discuss rue's anti-fertility properties, so a medieval scribe in or before the fourteenth century added the phrase: "it discharges the menses and aborts the foetus/embryo".⁹⁴ Writing between 1307 and 1311, Peter of Padua added a gloss beside the entry for *asarus* in the Latin text of the Alphabetical Dioscorides. The note comments that it was taken by uninformed people before coitus.⁹⁵ Like rue, *asarum* (*Asarum europaeum* L.) is an anti-fertility agent.⁹⁶

Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare* L.) is a plant familiar to us, but although it must also have been familiar to the Greeks and Romans there is no word for it in either of their languages. Throughout antiquity tansy wasted its blooms on poets and herbalists who failed to mention it in surviving documents. Presumably for the ancients it had no use, and hence no name. In contrast, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), abbess of her convent, prescribes tansy as an emmenagogue.⁹⁷ Today, tansy is a well-known abortifacient of the ecboic kind.⁹⁸ Tansy is just one example of many contraceptives and abortifacients of which the knowledge is first recorded in the medieval West. Even excluding emmenagogues and abortifacients, Peter of Spain (1226-77), in his *Drugs for Poor People* (*Thesaurus pauperum*), offered 116 prescriptions related to fertility and sexuality: 34 for aphrodisiacs, 26 for contraception and 56 to enhance fertility. Peter was the future Pope John XXI. As Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset observed, it is paradoxical that at a time when the church's stand against abortion

⁹⁴ "Kinei dē kai katamēnia, ta de embrua phtheirei": scholia to Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, iii.45 (ed. Wellmann, ii, p. 59); in a fourteenth-century manuscript: Vatican Lib., MS. Palat. 77.

⁹⁵ Gloss by Peter of Padua, printed in the Latin Alphabetical Dioscorides published at Colle in 1478, s.v. *asarus*: "The herb *asarum* . . . which is taken by rustic people before coitus" (*herba ab asaro . . . quem autem sit ante coitum viri ignorari*). There are two entries on *asarum* in the edition glossed by Peter.

⁹⁶ V. J. Brøndegaard, "Contraceptive Plant Drugs", *Planta medica*, xxiii (1973), p. 168.

⁹⁷ St. Hildegard, *Physica*, 111 (ed. Charles Daremberg, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ser. ed. J.-P. Migne, ser. lat., cxcvii, Paris, 1855, col. 1174): *reynfan* = *tanacetum*. The editor has bracketed the passage and raises the possibility of an interpolation, which, in any case, would indicate a medieval discovery. Hildegard discussed other abortifacient drugs.

⁹⁸ Arthur Osol et al., *Dispensatory of the United States of America*, 25th edn. (Philadelphia, 1955), p. 1896; *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, 6th edn. (Philadelphia, 1954), s.v. ecboic. A recent report on the use of tansy as an emmenagogue and abortifacient in folk medicine can be found in Conway and Slocum, "Plants Used as Abortifacients and Emmenagogues", p. 257.

and contraception was strong, knowledge of agents capable of acting in this way appears to have been widespread.⁹⁹ Albertus Magnus exemplifies the paradox: in his writings on medical lapidaries, Albertus included specific birth-control prescriptions, while at the same time speaking out against birth-control in his theological works.¹⁰⁰

III

BIRTH-CONTROL: THE SOCIOLOGY OF A KNOWLEDGE

The extent to which women throughout history have known about birth-control is an important but ultimately unanswerable question. Evidence such as that presented here nevertheless makes it reasonable to attribute some knowledge to women. In cases such as Queen Anne's lace, it is equally important to discover why so few women today know what must once have been known by many. In tackling the question of the acquisition of knowledge — of how our ancestors discovered that certain plants affected fertility — we may, however, uncover clues to the answer to the first two questions.

The death carrot (*thlapsi* = *Thlapsia garganica* L.) is related to the wild carrot (Queen Anne's lace) — both are umbellifers — and may have occasionally been confused with it. A drug extracted from the root of the death carrot was given to induce abortions, but, possibly on account of its strength, many ancient physicians omitted it from their list of suitable drugs.¹⁰¹ The great French botanist, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708), recorded that he had observed an "old woman doctress in Salamanca" who administered the death carrot to patients "to bring down the terms", but that the practice was "in great hazard of their lives".¹⁰² How had she acquired this knowledge?

⁹⁹ Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexualité et savoir médical au moyen âge* (Paris, 1985), pp. 126-8 (trans. by Matthew Adamson as *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1989).

¹⁰⁰ Albertus, *De mineralibus*, ii.2.8, 13 (ed. Auguste Borgnet, *B. Alberti Magni opera omnia*, 38 vols., Paris, 1890-9, v, pp. 39b, 43a); see also John M. Riddle and James Mulholland, "Albert on Stones and Minerals", in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences* (Toronto, 1980), p. 209; Pamela M. Huby, "Soul, Life, Sense, Intellect: Some Thirteenth-Century Problems", in G. R. Dunstan (ed.), *The Human Embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European Traditions* (Exeter, 1990), pp. 115-18.

¹⁰¹ According to Pliny, *Natural History*, xiii.43.125-6 (possibly *T. arvensis* L.); but Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, iv.153, showed no reluctance to relate medicinal usages for the plant.

¹⁰² J. P. de Tournefort, *The Compleat Herbal*, 2 vols. (London, 1719), ii, p. 149.

Discussing this very plant, Theophrastus (d. c. 287 B.C.) observed that "The cattle of the country [Attica] do not touch it, but imported cattle feed on it and perish of diarrhoea".¹⁰³ Even though Theophrastus did not specifically point to an anti-fertility effect, we can speculate that some people observing the behaviour of cattle were encouraged to experiment. Whether it was during Theophrastus' time, later or before, the historian can probably never know. All we can say with confidence is that by the first century A.D. death carrot was being prescribed as an anti-fertility agent, and that the knowledge that it possessed this quality was not arrived at in the research laboratory of a learned physician. It was learned physicians, however, who acknowledged its effectiveness and recorded it. The woman in Salamanca had probably acquired her knowledge of its properties through a combination of written and oral communication.

In his study of the history of contraception, written in 1936, Norman Himes concluded that oral contraceptives ("potions") in use during the classical period were ineffective and, secondly, that knowledge of the few other contraceptive devices that worked, specifically vaginal suppositories, would have been "confined largely to the heads of medical encyclopedists, to a few physicians and scholars".¹⁰⁴ Recent scholarly opinion on the history of birth-control can be traced back to Himes's study, which was tellingly entitled *Medical History of Contraception*. Himes failed to ask how this élite would have known in the first place what to prescribe for what, if not through the intelligent and critical observation of folk practice that was itself both intelligent and discerning.

The fourth-century Greek physician Oribasius listed as anti-fertility drugs "beaten wormwood, pennyroyal, century plant, thyme, rue and others which have those qualities".¹⁰⁵ Clearly he thought that his readers already knew the list. Moreover — as I will demonstrate elsewhere — the substances were pharmaceutically active as he presented them.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, a treatise attributed to Constantine the African, *On Sexual Intercourse*, contains no discussion of contraceptives and abortifacients apart from the

¹⁰³ Theophrastus, *De historia et causis plantarum*, ix.20.3 (ed. and trans. Hort, ii, p. 306).

¹⁰⁴ Himes, *Medical History of Contraception*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁵ Oribasius, *Collectiones medicae*, 2 (ed. Mørland, *Oribasius Latinus*, p. 148).

¹⁰⁶ Riddle, *History of Oral Contraceptives*.

intriguing statement that there are medicines “that impede and prohibit the semen and dry it out . . . [There are] cold nutriments that suppress the libido, [and] they are lettuce, purslane, cucumber, beets, mulberry, gourd and melons. There are in truth things that do not generate semen but dry it out and dissipate it on account of heat and dryness, and they are *dill, rue, and similar things*”.¹⁰⁷

There is even some evidence that ancient physicians, all those cited thus far being male, did not fully understand the procedures for taking the anti-fertility agents. In no account, medical or non-medical, is there sufficient detail to permit efficient administration. Medical writers did not normally write in modern “hand-book” style. The sixth-century medical writer Aetius of Amida gave this “liquid prescription that prevents pregnancy” (*Pino-menos de kōluei tēn sullēpsin*): “take Cyreniac juice [from *Ferula historica*], opopanax [*Ferula opopanax* Spr.] and rue in equal parts. Prepare by bruising leaves and soaking, and drink the amount of a bean in a mixture of wine and water”.¹⁰⁸

The amount recommended by Aetius at first seems too small to be effective, but the combination of the three anti-fertility plants would indeed have an effect, assuming that the calculation of the amount was within the correct margins, and that the harvesting and preparation were done properly. But as suggested, this sort of information is difficult to find in the medical documents as we have them. Doubtless — because it is difficult otherwise to understand how they could have discovered it — writers such as Aetius relied on what women had told them about amounts, preparations and frequencies. Quantities are rarely specified in the medical writings. The preparation and use of many, perhaps most, of the plant drugs required a large amount of knowledge derived from experience: among the critical factors are the morphological site of extraction, the means of extraction, the type of soil and weather conditions which the plant requires, the time to harvest it, and the amounts and frequencies of administration.¹⁰⁹ Thus knowledge of anti-fertility plants, and how and when to take them, appears from the evidence — scant though it is — to

¹⁰⁷ Constantine the African, *De coitus liber*, in *Constantini Africani opera*, p. 305.

¹⁰⁸ Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum*, xvi.17 (ed. Zervòs, p. 19). Even though the various prescriptions' ingredients (related on pp. 18-19) are the same as those related by Soranus (*Gynaecology*, i.63), the extra detail would indicate that Soranus was not Aetius' only source.

¹⁰⁹ John M. Riddle, *Dioscorides on Pharmacy and Medicine* (Austin, 1985), pp. xx-xxv *passim*.

belong to a female culture. Some of the medicinal plants were also salad plants. The implication, as illustrated by the remarks quoted above from Pliny and Gargilius Martialis,¹¹⁰ is that women were eating plants, such as rue and dill, from the same bowl as men who may not even have been aware of what was going on. One must suppose that the women knew what to eat, when and how often, and they would appear not to have learned this through books.

The transmission of such experience would have been most efficient in cultures where the practice of birth-control was acceptable, and would have been more difficult where there was strong cultural and religious resistance. Equally important, when women wanted to be fruitful and did not desire to limit pregnancies, there would understandably be a loss in folk knowledge about the drugs which was the cumulative experience of hundreds of generations.

Obviously the ancients had no controlled laboratory and scientific methodology. They learned through observation of what worked for them and, to some degree, for animals. This type of observation, if rigorously practised, can be a science. Neither the Hippocratic physicians, Soranus, Dioscorides or Galen, nor the hundreds of writers in the Middle Ages who discussed oral and suppository contraceptives, abortifacients and emmenagogues, had themselves made many or perhaps any of the discoveries.¹¹¹ In the first century, Dioscorides wrote that the leaves of the white willow tree (*Salix alba* L.) caused "inconception" (*asullemphia*).¹¹² As we have seen, the first modern scientific study to claim that plant substances have anti-fertility properties, by Skarzynski, concerned the willow; and, in the same year (1933), Butenandt and Jacobi disclosed their findings about the pomegranate. Although I cannot be certain, it seems unlikely to have been sheer coincidence that led modern science initially to select for testing the same plants as were employed in ancient medicine. There may be a connection between what ancient and medieval physicians recorded about folk medicine and what has been rediscovered in recent decades.

¹¹⁰ See above, pp. 15–16.

¹¹¹ John M. Riddle, "Folk Tradition and Folk Medicine: Recognition of Drugs in Classical Antiquity", in John Scarborough (ed.), *Folklore and Folk Medicines* (Madison, 1987), pp. 33–61.

¹¹² Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, i.104.1.4–5.

IV CONCLUSIONS

From classical antiquity onwards, we know that some form of birth-control has been practised. Some of the ancients, such as Plato, Aristotle and Polybius, specifically stated that there were ways to control population, but failed to specify the means.¹¹³ In addition, the occasional efforts of the Roman government to increase the birth-rate (or at least the rearing of children) testify that governmental leaders thought that the raising of children needed encouragement and that the issue could be addressed.¹¹⁴ Musonius Rufus attributed the low birth-rate during Augustus' reign to contraception and abortion.¹¹⁵ In the second century, Juvenal remarked that "we've so many sure-fire drugs (*medicamina*) for inducing sterility (*steriles facit*)"¹¹⁶ Similarly, in the medieval period, there are numerous religious, legal and other sources which indicate that contraceptives were not only known, but generally severely discouraged,¹¹⁷ such as the eighth-century penitential which enquires whether a woman had used a contraceptive.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Plato, *Laws*, v.740.D (ed. R. G. Bury, 2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1952, ii, p. 366); Aristotle, *Politics*, vii.14.10 (1335b, ll. 19-26) (ed. H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1927, pp. 622-4); Polybius, *Histories*, xxxvi.17.5-12 (ed. W. R. Paton, 6 vols., Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1960, vi, pp. 382-4).

¹¹⁴ The Augustan legislation to increase fertility of 18 B.C. (*Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*) and A.D. 9 (*Lex Papia Poppaea*) was followed by the Alimentary Laws that periodically provided, when resources were available between the first and third centuries A.D., cash payments to parents to raise children. See Richard Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 291-310. Josiah Cox Russell, *The Control of Late Ancient and Medieval Population* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 101-76, speaks of the first millennium A.D. as being a period of "population stability". In the second century B.C., Polybius bemoaned a population decline in Greece: Polybius, *Histories*, xxxvi.17.5-12 (ed. Paton, vi, pp. 383-5).

¹¹⁵ Musonius, frag. 15a (ed. O. Hense, *Musonii Rufi reliquiae*, Leipzig, 1905, p. 77); Keith Hopkins, "A Textual Emendation in a Fragment of Musonius Rufus", *Classical Quart.*, xv (1965), pp. 72-4.

¹¹⁶ Juvenal, *Satires*, vi.595 (trans. Peter Green, *The Sixteen Satires*, Harmondsworth, 1967, p. 149).

¹¹⁷ John T. Noonan Jr., *Contraception: A History of its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, enlarged edn. (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), *passim*; additional evidence was gathered by Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Contraception, marriage et relations amoureuses dans l'occident chrétien", *Annales E.S.C.*, xxiv (1969), pp. 1370-90; B. D. H. Miller, "She Who Hath Drunk Any Potion", *Medium aevum*, xxxi (1962), pp. 188-95.

¹¹⁸ Pseudo-Bede, *The Order for Giving Penance*, 30; trans. in Noonan, *Contraception*, p. 156: "Have you drunk any *maleficium*, that is, herbs or other agents so that you could not have children?" Noonan believes that *maleficium* meant a sterilizing drink and probably a contraceptive. *Maleficia* were used with and could apparently be interchanged with *steriles*.

In the introduction we noted that modern scholars have disregarded the testimony of our ancestors concerning oral contraceptives.¹¹⁹ Confronted with the demographic data, they turn to infanticide¹²⁰ and, more recently and related to infanticide, child abandonment,¹²¹ as the factors that supply the best explanation. In contrast, John Noonan, a Catholic canonist and historian, without citing either medical or scientific evidence in support of his case, has argued that the contraceptives must have had some positive effect simply on the basis of their persistence in historical

¹¹⁹ See esp. Himes, *Medical History of Contraception*, p. 97; Hopkins, "Contraception in the Roman Empire"; J. Knodel and E. van de Walle, "Lessons from the Past: Policy Implications of Historical Fertility Studies", *Population and Development Rev.*, v (1979), p. 227; Ariès, *Histoire des populations françaises*, pp. 494-8, 514-21; P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower — 225 B.C.-A.D. 14* (Oxford, 1971), p. 147. For an exception, see McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals*, p. 75: "The efficacy of these contraceptive drugs cannot, however, be totally dismissed".

¹²⁰ For the medieval period, see P. P. A. Biller, "Birth-Control in the West in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries", *Past and Present*, no. 94 (Feb. 1982), pp. 3-26. During classical antiquity the practice of infanticide — at least on a statistically significant scale — is contested by Donald Engels, "The Problem of Female Infanticide in the Greco-Roman World", *Classical Philology*, lxxv (1980), pp. 112-20; he defends his own position in Donald Engels, "The Use of Historical Demography in Ancient History", *Classical Quart.*, xxxiv (1984), pp. 386-93. For the claim that the evidence for infanticide is sufficiently strong to explain the (rather limited) data, see William Harris, "The Theoretical Possibility of Extensive Infanticide in the Graeco-Roman World", *Classical Quart.*, xxxii (1982), pp. 114-16. For support for Harris's case — at least for classical Athens — see Richard Feen, "Abortion and Exposure in Ancient Greece: Assessing the Status of the Fetus and 'Newborn' from Classical Sources", in William B. Bondeson *et al.* (eds.), *Abortion and the Status of the Fetus* (Dordrecht, 1983), pp. 283-300; Sarah B. Pomeroy, "The Family in Classical and Hellenistic Greece", *Trends in Hist.*, iii (1985), p. 25. See also the survey by William L. Langer, "Infanticide: A Historical Survey", *Hist. Childhood Quart.*, i (1974), pp. 353-65; Ruth Oldenziel, "The Historiography of Infanticide in Antiquity", in J. Blok and P. Mason (eds.), *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 87-107. Those who argue that there was extensive infanticide point to the male/female ratio in the population, which seems to have been higher than that we would expect biologically: see Vern Bulough and C. Campbell, "Female Longevity and Diet in the Middle Ages", *Speculum*, lv (1980), pp. 317-25. In a study conducted in rural areas in Bangladesh, the high ratio of males to females is attributed to high female mortality after the neo-natal period, which probably reflects sex-biased health- and nutrition-related behaviour: see Lincoln C. Chen, Emdadul Huq and Stan D'Souze, "Sex Bias in the Family Allocation of Food and Health Care in Rural Bangladesh", *Population and Development Rev.*, vii (1981), pp. 55-70. This suggests to me that, were there to have been a high male-to-female ratio in classical antiquity, differentials in care are a better explanation than infanticide. I advance this hypothesis mindful of Donald Engels' lament ("Use of Historical Demography", p. 390) that comparing the classical world with modern studies, such as that of Bangladesh, "is fast becoming a nuisance in the writing of classical social and economic history".

¹²¹ John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York, 1988).

records over long periods of time. More recently David Herlihy has tentatively suggested that some form of effective contraception was used in late medieval Tuscan marriages, on the grounds that married women during the height of their fertile periods had fewer children than expected.¹²² This medieval evidence accords with the result of a comparison between paleopathological data from the prehistoric Mediterranean region and preliminary findings from the first century A.D. Studies based on burials at Lerna indicate that forty-seven women (c. 1750 B.C.) allegedly averaged five births each, while at Karatas (c. 2400 B.C.) 164 women averaged four births.¹²³ These relatively high numbers contrast sharply with a study of the women who died in A.D. 79 at Herculaneum, who averaged only 1.81 births each.¹²⁴ This evidence is not as "hard" as it appears, because there is some question whether the number of times a woman gave birth can be so precisely and consistently revealed through the count of lesions (dorsal pits) near the symphyseal border on female pubes indicating the number of parturitions.¹²⁵ The fact that the women at Herculaneum all died at the same time, some without having experienced a full life of pregnancy vulnerability, needs also to be taken into account.¹²⁶ Just the same, when taken with the other material, such as demographic, medical, legal, theological and other literary records, the evidence is against infanticide as the primary factor

¹²² David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), pp. 146-9.

¹²³ J. Lawrence Angel, "The Bases of Paleodemography", *Amer. Jl. Physical Anthropol.*, new ser., xxx (1969), p. 433.

¹²⁴ The data are forthcoming in S. Bisel's study of the skeletons of women who died at Herculaneum, described by Ann Hanson, "Greco-Roman Gynecology", *Soc. for Ancient Medicine and Pharmacy Newsletter*, xvii (1989), p. 89.

¹²⁵ D. Gentry Steele and Claud A. Bramblett, *The Anatomy and Biology of the Human Skeleton* (College Station, Texas, 1988), pp. 202-4. One study has found that while there is a statistical association between the number of marks or lesions and full-term pregnancies, the "correlation is not strong": Judy Myers Suchey *et al.*, "Analysis of Dorsal Pitting in the *Os Pubis* in an Extensive Sample of Modern American Females", *Amer. Jl. Physical Anthropol.*, new ser., li (1979), pp. 517-40. Another study concludes that the parturition number cannot be more precisely stated than as indicating those women who had full-term pregnancies and those who did not: Marc A. Kelley, "Parturition and Pelvic Changes", *Amer. Jl. Physical Anthropol.*, new ser., li (1979), pp. 541-5.

¹²⁶ J. Lawrence Angel's studies show that during the earlier classical age of Greece women averaged 4.3 births. Based on the typical age at marriage (14-15) and the fact that the skeletal remains indicate an average of lifespan of 36.2 years, one might expect each woman to have had five or six children. See Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (New York, 1975), p. 68. In comparison, the average number of children born to married women in France between 1550 and 1599 was 6.53: see Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound* (Oxford, 1986), p. 217.

influencing demographic data, because of the paucity of evidence attesting its widespread usage. If there is so little evidence for infanticide, it is unlikely that it was very common. On the other hand, there is abundant testimony to chemical birth-control measures.

Were contraceptives and early-term abortifacients a significant part of birth-control? Can such birth-control account for the indications of planned parenthood in fifteenth-century Florence, or the low fertility of first-century Romans, or of the inhabitants of fifth-century Constantinople? A series of anthropological-historical studies from Nigeria, China, Korea, the Soviet Union, Haiti, New Mexico, Paraguay, Egypt, Malaysia and India reveal that present-day traditional societies employ a variety of anti-fertility agents.¹²⁷ If modern populations can regulate their fertility by plant drugs, surely so could pre-modern societies, as there is strong evidence that similar methods and agents were being used.¹²⁸

The findings of modern medical science and anthropology enable us to believe the testimony of historical documents con-

¹²⁷ For Nigeria, see D. D. O. Oylebola, "Yoruba Traditional Healers' Knowledge of Contraception, Abortion, and Infertility", *East African Medical J.*, lviii (1981), pp. 777-84; for China, Kong, Xie and But, "Fertility Regulating Agents", pp. 1-44; for Korea, J. O. Kokwaro, "A Review of Research on Plants for Fertility Regulation", *Korean J. Pharmacognosy*, xii (1981), pp. 149-52; for the Soviet Union, V. V. Kharkhov and M. N. Mats, "Pasteniia kak potentsial'nye istochniki protivozachatochnhkh sredstv" [Plants as a Potential Source of Contraceptive Drugs], *Rastite'nye Resursy*, xvii (1981), pp. 293-9; for Haiti, B. Weniger, H. Haag-Berrurier and R. Anton, "Plants of Haiti Used as Antifertility Agents", *J. Ethnopharmacology*, vi (1982), pp. 67-84; for New Mexico, Conway and Slocumb, "Plants Used as Abortifacients and Emmenagogues", pp. 241-61; for Paraguay, P. Arenas and R. Moreno Azorero, "Plants Used as Means of Abortion, Contraception, Sterilization and Fecundation by Paraguayan Indigenous People", *Econ. Botany*, xxxi (1977), pp. 302-6; for Egypt, K. C. Tiwari, R. Majumder and S. Bhattacharjee, "Folklore Information from Assam for Family Planning and Birth Control", *Internat. J. Crude Drug Research*, xx (1982), p. 133; for Malaysia, Carol Laderman, *Wives and Midwives: Childbirth and Nutrition in Rural Malaysia* (Berkeley, 1983), esp. p. 78; for India, R. C. D. Casey, "Alleged Anti-Fertility Plants of India", *Indian J. Medical Sciences*, xiv (1960), pp. 590-600.

¹²⁸ In an extensive recent survey of birth-control methods conducted by the World Fertility Survey (W.F.S.) and the Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys (C.P.S.), women who replied to the question about contraceptive use and said that they took herbs, were placed in the category, "Not using". The result was that as many as 93.5 per cent of the women in Bangladesh and as few as 33.2 per cent in Costa Rica were categorized as non-users of contraceptives! John E. Anderson and John G. Cleland, "The World Fertility Survey and Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys: A Comparison of Substantive Results", *Studies in Family Planning*, xv (1984), p. 7. The blind neglect of traditional medical remedies in this survey is in stark contrast to the World Health Organization's call for the study of such medicines.

cerning the use of plant substances for birth-control. Right up to the twentieth century women have held that they had a right to take contraceptive and menstrual regulators, even when it aborted pregnancy, provided it was before the foetus moved or quickened.¹²⁹ What they did — as they tell us — was to take drugs and to be as careful as possible. Since we are willing to trust in the reliability of their testimony concerning the caution, we should be equally willing to do so when it comes to the drug-taking.

North Carolina State University

John M. Riddle

¹²⁹ McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals*, p. 107.



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WOMEN'S MEDICAL PRACTICE AND HEALTH CARE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

MONICA GREEN

It is a commonplace—both in histories of medicine and histories of women—that throughout the Middle Ages “women’s health was women’s business.”¹ Midwives, it is claimed, were the sole providers of women’s health care, and they maintained an unchallenged monopoly on this specialty of medicine until it was gradually wrenched away from them by so-called man-midwives in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At least two assumptions lie embedded in statements such as these: first, that “midwife” is necessarily synonymous with “caretaker of all of women’s health

My thanks to the many colleagues who brought to my attention both their own and others’ recently published works, and to the Interlibrary Loan staff at Duke University who performed wonders in tracking down the more elusive books and articles. I am particularly indebted to Michael McVaugh, Katharine Park, and the late John F. Benton for their suggestions and especially for sharing their research-in-progress with me. Very special thanks go to Kate Cooper for seeing the glimmer of light in my cloudiest thoughts. *Dedico questo contributo a Marta e Saro.*

¹ For example, Beryl Rowland, *Medieval Woman’s Guide to Health: The First English Gynecological Handbook* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1981), xv, who uses the formulation “women’s illnesses were women’s business.”

concerns,"² and, second, that in the Middle Ages there existed a sexual division of medical labor so absolute that men did not concern themselves with women's medical conditions (particularly gynecological or obstetrical matters), nor (as some would suggest) did women medical practitioners concern themselves with men. These assumptions are enticing in their simplicity, yet it is astounding how little historical evidence has been brought forth to substantiate them.

Since the purpose of this essay will be to challenge assumptions such as these, let me be clear about an assumption of my own: that most women in the Middle Ages required medical care at some point in their lives. Reproduction was one of the most taxing labors a woman's body had to bear, and it brought with it all manner of risks of infection and other complications. Even women neither gestating nor lactating—whether for reasons of age, infertility, circumstance, or personal choice—may have been subject to innumerable afflictions of the reproductive organs, including menstrual difficulties, infections, and cancers, all of which might be further complicated by malnutrition (which was almost certainly a chronic factor of medieval life). And all women, of course, may have been subject to the same general diseases and injuries that afflict men and children.³ I assume, therefore, that women's need for health care was more or less constant⁴ and that at least some of this need was addressed by specialized caretakers.

² Actually, there is a pernicious ambiguity with which "women's health" is discussed. Although the term is not usually defined explicitly, in actual use "women's health" is generally discussed solely in terms of childbirth or other matters directly concerned with it. There may be many reasons for this almost exclusive focus on the birth event (evident in the primary as well as the secondary sources), e.g., patriarchal concern over ensuring women's capacity to reproduce or the fact that birth is one of the few points in a woman's life when her health becomes a matter of public concern. However, if our interest is in the history of women rather than the history of childbirth, we should be asking how women's health as a whole was attended, not simply how the few hours of birth were supervised. Thus, even if we do find that midwives did not treat all of women's diseases, it is still legitimate (indeed imperative) to ask who did.

³ For an excellent summary of the general medical landscape of medieval Europe, see Katharine Park, "Medicine and Society in Medieval Europe, 500–1500," in *Medicine in Society*, ed. Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press). For an interesting argument on how technological innovation may have affected women's health, see Vern Bullough and Cameron Campbell, "Female Longevity and Diet in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 55, no. 2 (April 1980): 317–25.

⁴ I am by no means suggesting that morbidity patterns are historically unvarying (as any study of plague, puerperal fever, syphilis, AIDS, or countless other diseases will show). Nevertheless, I do assume that the biomedical experience of medieval women was close enough to that of twentieth-century women to permit comparison.

But precisely who were these caretakers of women? Was the division of medical labor in the Middle Ages so simple and straightforward that the history of women's health care can be considered coextensive with a history of women medical practitioners? The history of the medical treatment of women in fact extends far beyond the question of whether it was provided exclusively by other women; likewise, the history of women's medical practice is by no means limited simply to determining whom they treated. Nevertheless, the history of women patients and the history of women practitioners in medieval Europe are inextricably interwoven: to understand what sort of health care women received, we also need to know what sort of health care they were allowed to give.

Only two monographs have been written on medieval women healers and women's health care, and the few articles published thus far on specific issues do not, even when taken together, constitute a comprehensive history of the subject.⁵ Nevertheless, by analyzing the findings of these disparate studies together with the results of recent work on the general social history of medieval medicine, the outlines of a composite picture of women's medical care and medical practice in the Middle Ages begin to emerge. This picture, sketchy as it may be, shows that the assumptions we have accepted so uncritically about women's health care and the sexual division of medical labor in the Middle Ages have masked a reality far more complex than hitherto imagined. It also suggests directions that future research will have to take if we are to see past the prejudices that have

⁵ Muriel Joy Hughes, *Women Healers in Medieval Life and Literature* (1943; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968); and Paul Diepgen, *Frau und Frauenheilkunde in der Kultur des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1963). The general works of Melina Lipinska and Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead on women healers throughout history contain substantial sections on the medieval period; see Lipinska, *Histoire des femmes médecins depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: G. Jacques, 1900), and her later summary, *Les femmes et le progrès des sciences médicales* (Paris: Masson & Cie, 1930); and Hurd-Mead, *A History of Women in Medicine* (1938; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1977). The latter work, though admirably ambitious, is sadly unreliable in many of its particulars. Walther Schönfeld, *Frauen in der abendländischen Heilkunde vom klassischen Altertum bis zum Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1947), offers a useful summary of biographical data on individual women. Most recently, see Margaret Wade Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life: A Small Sound of the Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton; Boston: Beacon, 1986 [the title and the subtitle have been reversed in the U.S. edition]), chap. 8; and Gundolf Keil, "Die Frau als Ärztin und Patientin in der medizinischen Fachprosa des deutschen Mittelalters," in *Frau und spätmittelalterlicher Alltag: Internationaler Kongress, Krems an der Donau, 2. bis 5. Oktober 1984* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), 157–211.

rendered this fundamental aspect of women's history into a topic so trivial as to be unworthy of critical investigation.⁶

Although narrow in its primary focus on women's gynecological and obstetrical health care and its providers in Western Christian society after the eleventh century,⁷ in other ways this essay extends

⁶ Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg ("Is Childbirth Any Place for a Woman? The Decline of Midwifery in Eighteenth-Century England," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 10 [1981]: 393–408) notes that the Victorian stereotype of the midwife as a "fat, dirty, drunken old woman" has "passed from fiction into fact to encompass all midwives in all periods in many serious works" by even the most respected historians (393). This attitude might also be part of the reason why there are few serious, comprehensive histories of gynecological and obstetrical practice. A welcome indication of change is Yvonne Knibiehler and Catherine Fouquet, *La femme et les médecins: Analyse historique* (Paris: Hachette, 1983).

⁷ For late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see Monica Green, "*Obstetrixes litteratae*: The Audience of Gynecological Literature in the Late Antique West" (paper presented at the International Conference on "Lebensbedingungen, Lebensnormen und Lebensformen für Frauen in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter," Freie Universität, Berlin, February 18–21, 1987), "The Transmission of Ancient Theories of Female Physiology and Disease through the Early Middle Ages" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1985), and "The *De genecia* Attributed to Constantine the African," *Speculum* 62, no. 2 (April 1987): 299–323; Gerhard Baader, "Frauenheilkunde und Geburtshilfe im Frühmittelalter," in *Frauen in der Geschichte*, vol. 7, *Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Geschichte der Frauen im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Werner Affeldt and Annette Kuhn (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1986), 126–35. Other than Diepgen's survey (n. 5 above), only a handful of works on Byzantium and the Islamic world can be recommended. For late antique Byzantium, see Giorgio del Guerra, *Il libro di Metrodora sulle malattie delle donne e il ricettario di cosmetica e terapia* (Milan: Ceschina, 1953), and "La medicina bizantina e il codice medico-ginecologica di Metrodora," *Scientia Veterum* (Pisa) 118 (1968): 67–94. Also, Timothy Miller's *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) contains some information on women's medical care and practice in medieval Greek hospitals. On the Islamic world, see 'Arib ibn Sa'id, *Le livre de la génération du fœtus et le traitement des femmes enceintes et des nouveau-nés* (Arabic text with French translation), ed. and trans. Henri Jahier and Nourredine Abdelkader (Algiers: Librairie Ferraris, 1956), and the new Spanish translation, Antonio Arjona Castro, ed., *El libro de la generación del feto, el tratamiento de las mujeres embarazadas y de los recién nacidos de 'Arib ibn Sa'id (Tratado de ostetricia y pediatría hispano árabe del siglo X)* (Cordoba: Publicaciones de la excma. diputación provincial, 1983); the uneven article by R. L. Verma, "Women's Role in Islamic Medicine through the Ages," *Arab Historian* 22 (1982): 21–48; and the brief anecdote about "The Midwife of Khumarawaih and Her Sister," in *Land of Enchanters: Egyptian Short Stories from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Bernard Lewis (London: Harvill, 1948), 105–7. For the history of one aspect of Islamic medicine fundamental to women's lives, see Basim F. Musallam, *Sex and Society in Islam: Birth Control before the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. chap. 2. For women practitioners within the Jewish communities of medieval Europe, see Harry Friedenwald, "Jewish Doctoresses in the Middle Ages," in his *The Jews and Medicine: Essays*, 2 vols. (1944;

broadly: geographically, to include all of western Europe; chronologically, to include some pertinent research from the early modern period (which can often only be separated from the medieval period by arbitrary and ultimately unhelpful boundaries); and categorically, to include discussion of female medical practitioners in general for reasons that will soon become apparent.

Women as medical practitioners

When it concerns the Middle Ages, a simple (but hardly insignificant) equation is often made between "woman medical practitioner" and "midwife."⁸ The danger of such an equation is not merely semantic inaccuracy, for such a blurring of categories frustrates any attempt to grasp the realities of the gynecological and obstetrical care women received or the expectations made by medieval society of both women and men in medical practice. More important, it is simply not true. Several major prosopographical studies provide a preliminary body of data on medieval medical

reprint, New York: Ktav, 1967), 1:217–20; Marcello Segre, "Dottorresse ebee nel medioevo," *Pagine di storia della medicina* 14, no. 5 (September/October 1970): 98–106, though note that not all the women he includes have been securely identified as Jewish; and A. Cardoner Planas, "Seis mujeres hebreas practicando la medicina en el reino de Aragón," *Sefarad* 9, no. 2 (1949): 441–45. Joseph Shatzmiller of the University of Toronto is currently engaged in a comprehensive study of Jewish women practitioners (personal communication, February 1988). S. D. Goitein, in his exhaustive study of Jewish life in medieval Egypt, has noted how surprisingly rare it is to find accounts of midwives and childbirth (*A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978], 3:232). However, Ron Barkai has recently identified several medieval Hebrew gynecological works; his edition of one of these, the *Sefer ha-Toledet*, is forthcoming from Les Editions du Cerf, Paris.

⁸ For example, in her study of a fifteenth-century gynecological text, Helen Lemay occasionally uses the terms "midwife" and "old woman" (i.e., "old woman medical practitioner") as if they were completely interchangeable; see Lemay, "Anthonius Guainerius and Medieval Gynecology," in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1985), 317–36, esp. 326–27. See also C. H. Talbot and E. A. Hammond, *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England: A Biographical Register* (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1965), 211, where they describe Matilda la Leche as "probably the 'sage femme' of Wallingford" (emphasis added). This may be mere assumption rather than a fact supported by the evidence. "Leech" was a generic term for "healer," and it is unwarranted to assume that just because Matilda was a woman, her practice must necessarily have been limited to midwifery. (Since writing this, I have found that A. L. Wyman makes the same point in a letter to the editor, *History Today* 36 [October 1986]: 59, suggesting that the interpolation was on the part of the Victorian editor of the document.)

practitioners, data that demonstrate that numerous medical specialties were recognized in the High and late Middle Ages, as evidenced both by the terminology used to designate different practitioners and by legislation and guild organization. Although they were not represented on all levels of medicine equally, women were found scattered throughout a broad medical community consisting of physicians, surgeons, barber-surgeons, apothecaries, and various uncategorizable empirical healers.⁹ Midwives, then, were part of a much larger community of women practitioners, and it will be useful to discuss female healers in general in order to set a context for the specific historical details of women's medical care.¹⁰

⁹ The distinctions between these categories of healers were roughly as follows: physicians, who could often boast of a university training, claimed as their province the general business of diagnosis and treatment of internal diseases; surgeons carried out most of the manual aspects of the medical art (bone setting, amputations, etc.), while barber-surgeons were largely confined to more minor surgical procedures, particularly bloodletting. Apothecaries would be responsible for dispensing medications, though this role took on real medical import when advice was dispensed as well. "Empiric" is a generic term used loosely to signify all those individuals who took up medical practice on their own, independent of university sanction, state licensure, or guild regulation. It should be emphasized, however, that these categories were much more fluid and subjectively defined than in the modern, highly regulated medical industry of Westernized societies. (Indeed, even the vocabulary to distinguish these specialties does not begin to take shape until the tenth and eleventh centuries.) The possibility of overlap in function was enormous, hence the intensity with which certain practitioners fought to solidify hazy boundaries.

¹⁰ I should stress that I am limiting the following discussion to women who can in some sense be called medical specialists or "professionals"—i.e., women who at some point in their lives would have either identified themselves in terms of their medical practice or been so identified by their communities. "Professional" should be understood in its loosest sense. On this point, see the important insights of Margaret Pelling, who has recently stressed that in preindustrial times few medical practitioners relied *solely* on medicine for their livelihood: Pelling, "Medical Practice in Early Modern England: Trade or Profession?" in *The Professions in Early Modern England*, ed. Wilfrid Prest (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 90–128. Furthermore, I do not pretend to be discussing all the situations in which women gave or received health care (e.g., in hospitals); on the contrary, I imagine that most of the medical care women gave and received in the Middle Ages would probably have been in a familial context where few of the issues discussed here would have come into play. For some indication of what this familial context looked like in a later period, see Adrian Wilson, "Participant or Patient? Seventeenth Century Childbirth from the Mother's Point of View," in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-industrial Society*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 129–44. Findings from anthropological studies of modern non-industrial societies might be of comparative value; see Sheila Cosminsky, "Cross-cultural Perspectives on Midwifery," in *Medical Anthropology*, ed. Francis X. Grollig and Harold B. Haley (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976), 229–48. A final limitation of this essay is the omission of miraculous cures and religious healers, which, though important elements of medieval medical practice, involve issues too complicated to be properly addressed here.

Although in all the prosopographical studies conducted thus far women's numbers are remarkably small,¹¹ the data nevertheless demonstrate conclusively that women's medical practice was by no means limited to midwifery. For example, of the 7,647 practitioners documented by Ernest Wickersheimer and Danielle Jacquart in France for the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, 121 (approximately 1.5 percent) were women.¹² Of these, forty-four are identified by terms we might translate as "midwife" (*matrone, sage-femme, ventrière, mère-aleresse*), while the rest (close to two-thirds) practiced as barbers, surgeons, trained physicians, or untrained empirics. Three are referred to as *sorcières*.¹³

As sparse as the data for France are, the silence of the records for England is positively deafening. C. H. Talbot and E. A. Hammond's biographical register of medical practitioners in England, Scotland, and Wales covers the period from Anglo-Saxon times up to the beginning of the sixteenth century. In these eight centuries, the authors found records of only eight women: six identified as physicians, or more literally, "healers" (*medica* or *leche*), one as a surgeon (*la surgiene*), and one as a midwife (*obstetrix*).¹⁴ Although Edward Kealey's in-depth study of medical practitioners during the Norman period (1100–1154) has not added any new entries to Talbot and Hammond's list of women for that period,¹⁵ he has identified three more names to add to the roll of women practitioners in later twelfth- and thirteenth-century England: the two sisters, Solicita and Matilda, each of whom is designated *medica*, and Euphemia (d. 1257), abbess of Wherell, whom Kealey describes as "an active physician."¹⁶ Talbot and Hammond's register has recently been supplemented for the later medieval period (1340–1530) by Robert Gottfried, who claims to have found evidence for a total of twenty-eight women practitioners (eight "leeches," sixteen barbers, and four apothecaries) in the

¹¹ Aside from those of Danielle Jacquart and, to a limited extent, Robert Gottfried, none of the following studies have attempted quantitative analyses of the data on women. Most of the figures and interpretations that follow reflect my own tabulations drawn from indices and a rapid survey of the compiled data.

¹² Danielle Jacquart, *Le milieu médical en France du XIIe au XVe siècle: En annexe 2e supplément au "Dictionnaire" d'Ernest Wickersheimer* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981). To this total of 121 can be added the six (not five as stated on p. 47 of her work) additional women whom Jacquart lists in her app. C.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 47–54.

¹⁴ Talbot and Hammond (n. 8 above). See the index (502) under "Women Practitioners," though note that Pernell (241) was inadvertently omitted here.

¹⁵ Edward J. Kealey, *Medieval Medicus: A Social History of Anglo-Norman Medicine* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 35.

¹⁶ Edward J. Kealey, "England's Earliest Women Doctors," *Journal of the History of Medicine and the Allied Sciences* 40, no. 4 (October 1985): 473–77.

two centuries of his survey. Yet even these women constitute only 1.2 percent of the 2,282 entries in Gottfried's "doctor's data bank."¹⁷

No comprehensive survey of female practitioners has yet been made of medieval Italy,¹⁸ though several localized studies of individual cities or regions provide evidence of women's varied medical practice. Alcide Garosi, for example, has documented 550 Sienese medical practitioners between 774 and 1555, two of whom are women—both physicians (*mediche*).¹⁹ Ladislao Münster has found documents regarding seven women who practiced medicine in Venice in the first half of the thirteenth century, including a physician who was accorded the title "master" (*magistra*); a surgeon's widow (no specific practitioner label is attached to her own name) who was fined for malpractice on "many people, men and women"; and a specialist of gout and eye problems.²⁰ None of the documents suggest that these women concentrated on women's diseases. Katharine Park, in her study of the late medieval Florentine Guild of Doctors, Apothecaries, and Grocers, explicitly acknowledges that midwives, barbers, and other practitioners on the medical periphery have not been included in her research. Park finds only four women doctors who were members of the guild and only two others who are documented in contemporary tax records.²¹

¹⁷ Robert S. Gottfried, *Doctors and Medicine in Medieval England, 1340–1530* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), esp. 87, 89, and 251. Gottfried's study is of little use in learning more about women's medical practice since he gives no specific information on these women (he does not even provide their names and dates) nor does he include midwives among his categories of practitioners.

¹⁸ Ladislao Münster, "Women Doctors in Mediaeval Italy," *Ciba Symposium* (English ed.) 10, no. 3 (1962): 136–40, is the only available survey. Unfortunately, Münster's brief study was published without any documentation, and his findings, therefore, need to be rechecked against the original sources.

¹⁹ Alcide Garosi, *Siena nella storia della medicina (1240–1555)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1958); see 356–98 for his biographical list. The two women were Chatalana (fl. late fourteenth century) and Giovanna di Paulo (fl. ca. 1410). One wonders how Garosi focused his research, however, for the absence of barbers and apothecaries (not to mention midwives) from his list suggests that he did not define "healer" very broadly.

²⁰ Ladislao Münster, "Notizie di alcune 'medichesse' veneziane della prima metà del Trecento," in *Scritti in onore del Prof. A. Pazzini* (Saluzzo: Edizioni Minerva Medica, 1954), 180–87. For further information on the broader context of medical practice in Venice, see Ugo Stefanutti, *Documentazioni cronologiche per la storia della medicina, chirurgia e farmacia in Venezia dal 1258 al 1332* (Venice: Ferdinando Ongania, 1961).

²¹ Katharine Park, *Doctors and Medicine in Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 8, 71–72. Park (personal communication, December 10, 1986) informs me that she has since found one, perhaps two, additional women doctors in the guild. Other women in the guild were grocers, apothecaries, leatherworkers, metal workers, painters, etc.

Women practitioners in the south of Italy were, if not more numerous, at least more visible in the documents that have been examined. Salvatore De Renzi's nineteenth-century study of the famous medical center of Salerno mentions several women practitioners: the so-called Salernitan women (*mulieres Salernitanae*) who are frequently mentioned in Salernitan medical literature of the twelfth century, as well as four other women (who are known by name) who not only practiced medicine but also are said to have written learned treatises.²² Of these, the most famous is the eleventh- or twelfth-century physician Trota, whose existence and authorship have been the subject of a centuries-long, largely sterile debate that, as Susan Mosher Stuard has observed, has told us more about the prejudices of the disputants than about the woman herself.²³ Happily, the controversy has been brought to a close by John Benton's recent discovery of Trota's genuine work (a practical book of medicine) and his demonstration that the texts which circulated under her name were falsely attributed.²⁴

Licenses of women who practiced between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries also provide important evidence. Raffaele Calvanico's study of medicine in the Kingdom of Naples from 1273 to 1410 provides evidence for a total of twenty-four women surgeons, thirteen of whom were explicitly licensed to practice on women. Most interesting is the fact that some of these thirteen were not limited to treating women's peculiar diseases (i.e., those of the

²² Salvatore De Renzi, *Collectio salernitana*, 5 vols. (Naples: Filiatre-Sebezio, 1852–59), 1:159–60, regarding the *mulieres Salernitanae*; on Abella, Rebecca Guarna, and Mercuriade (none of whose dates have yet been established), see De Renzi, 372–73, where the fourteenth-century physician Costanza Calenda is also mentioned. On Costanza, see also Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Learned Women of Early Modern Italy: Humanists and University Scholars," in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 115, n. 52. On Trota, see John F. Benton, "Trotula, Women's Problems, and the Professionalization of Medicine in the Middle Ages," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 59, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 30–53. Benton also cites evidence for two other women healers at Salerno (38–39).

²³ Susan Mosher Stuard, "Dame Trot," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1975): 537–42; see also Benton for an extended review of this protracted debate.

²⁴ Benton, esp. 41–46. Only one manuscript of Trota's genuine work, the *Practica secundum Trotam*, is now known to exist. Although the three other works that circulated widely under her name (the *Trotula* treatises) are spurious, that they were attributed to her is palpable evidence of her fame—much the way Hippocrates is associated with the ancient Greek Hippocratic Corpus even though he probably did not author any part of it.

breasts and genitalia) but seem to have been expected to perform a whole variety of surgical operations on women.²⁵

The mass of documentation for the social history of medieval Spanish medicine has only begun to be studied, yet some preliminary results are available. Michael McVaugh has been undertaking an exhaustive study of the archives of the Crown of Aragón between 1285 and 1335. As rich and complete as these archives are, McVaugh has not been able to document a single woman medical practitioner attached to the royal household.²⁶ In contrast, studies of the wider medical community in fourteenth-century Valencia by Luis Garcia Ballester, McVaugh, and Augustin Rubio Vela reveal several women who were practicing both as unofficial, empirical healers (*curanderas*) and as licensed physicians (*metgesses*), the latter often being Muslim women who practiced within the ruling Christian community.²⁷ Like their Italian counterparts, it is clear that their practice was not limited exclusively to gynecological and obstetrical problems, and they may even have had more freedom to treat both men and women than did their Italian sisters.²⁸

To my knowledge, no comprehensive archival study has yet been done of medical practitioners in the medieval German prin-

²⁵ Raffaele Calvanico, *Fonti per la storia della medicina e della chirurgia per il regno di Napoli nel periodo angioino (a. 1273-1410)* (Naples: L'Arte Tipografica, 1962). Since these women cannot all be readily identified in Calvanico's index, I list them here with their entry numbers: Adelicia da Capua (3006); Bona di Guglielmo di Odorisio da Miglionico (3119); Clarice di Durisio da Foggia (3127); Costanza da Barletta (1168, 1209); Francesca, wife of Matteo di Romano da Salerno (1451, 1872, 1874); Francesca, wife of Vestis (916); Gemma da Molfetta (1981); Isabella da Ocre (3195); Lauretta, wife of Giovanni dal Ponte da Saracena (1413, 2023, 2026); Letizia di Manso da Friano (3072); Mabilia di Scarpa da S. Maria (3327, 3371, 3406); Margherita di Napoli, da S. Maria (3534); Margherita de Ruga (3572, 3620); Margherita da Venosa (3226); Maria Gallicia (1165, 1234); Maria Incarnata (3571); Polisena de Troya (3598, 3610); Raymunda de Taberna (3643); Sabella di Ocro (or de Erro) (3071); Sibilia d'Afflicto di Benevento (3407); Sibilia da S. Giovanni Rotondo (3227); Trotta di Troya (966); Venturella Consinata (1875); Vigorita da Rosano (3512). Calvanico's notes on Clarice indicate that she was licensed to practice as a surgeon for women's eye problems (*chirurga oculista per le donne*).

²⁶ Michael McVaugh, personal communication.

²⁷ Luis Garcia Ballester, Michael McVaugh, and Augustin Rubio Vela, *Licensing, Learning and the Control of Medical Practice in Fourteenth-Century Valencia* (Philadelphia: American Philosophic Society, in press). Although a full tabulation of all the known Spanish women practitioners has not yet been made, McVaugh has indicated to me that most appear only after 1350.

²⁸ One woman, Bevenguda, was licensed by the king in 1394 with the explicit recognition that she already had experience "treating and curing many men and children of both sexes of serious conditions and illnesses" (Garcia Ballester, McVaugh, and Rubio Vela).

cialties, though here again the few data that have been assembled indicate that women performed a variety of medical functions, not simply midwifery. Walther Schönfeld, for example, has found evidence for fifteen women practitioners (most of them Jewish) in Frankfurt am Main between 1387 and 1497, several of whom specialized in eye diseases. None is referred to as a midwife.²⁹

These data on medieval Europe as a whole thus offer us tangible evidence for the existence of all kinds of women healers.³⁰ Still, we are left wondering why the evidence for these women—and especially for midwives—is so sparse, forming (in those instances where percentages can be tabulated) no more than the tiniest fraction of the medical populace as a whole. Is it really possible that there was only one midwife in the whole of England or that there were none at all in Italy? Obviously, beyond the general poverty of sources all medieval researchers must face, there is need to acknowledge the special limitations of the historical record for research on women, for apart from medical licenses, the principal sources used have been wills, property transfers, court records, and similar documents, all of which traditionally underrepresent women.³¹ Indeed, it is generally the unusual woman—the one who has acquired enough personal wealth to leave a will or be taxed, the one who is brought to court on civil or criminal charges—that finds her way into the historical record, not her less conspicuous colleague.³² The absence of women may also be due to the parameters by which some researchers themselves have chosen to define their investigations. Focusing on the upper echelons of “learned” medicine, sometimes to the complete exclusion of empirics and other healers on the legal and social fringes of medical practice (where most women would have been found), these studies by their

²⁹ Schönfeld (n. 5 above), 75. Schönfeld's list and other documents on German women's medical practice have been collected by Peter Ketsch in *Frauen im Mittelalter*, Band 1: *Frauenarbeit im Mittelalter, Quellen und Materialien*, Studien materialien Band 14: Geschichtsdidaktik, ed. Annette Kuhn (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1983), 1:259–307.

³⁰ Gundolf Keil (n. 5 above, 204–6) suggests that women who translated, copied, and illustrated medical texts should also be included in assessing women's involvement in medicine. Keil would also include women for whom special tracts were written or to whom treatises were dedicated, since, in those cases where they actually commissioned the works to be written, these women were very obviously displaying an active interest in women's health care.

³¹ Werner Gerabek has recently suggested the potential value of letter collections as a source for the history of medicine; see “*Consolida maior, Consolida minor* und eine Kräuterfrau: Medizinhistorische Beobachtungen zur Reinhardtsbrunner Briefsammlung,” *Sudhoffs Archiv* 67, no. 1 (1983): 80–93, esp. 92.

³² Even these women often only surface in the records as widows or unmarried women, i.e., only when they are no longer legally “covered” by a husband or father.

very nature offer limited hope of documenting the existence of women practitioners.

The advantages of broadening the definition of "medical practitioner" are immediately apparent in Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster's study of sixteenth-century London and Norwich. Instead of focusing solely on officially recognized and licensed physicians, barbers, and surgeons, Pelling and Webster use as their working definition "any individual whose occupation is basically concerned with the care of the sick."³³ The dramatic increase in the number of women practitioners who can thus be identified cannot be attributed solely to demographic or social changes in the early modern period.³⁴ In London, Pelling and Webster have found an estimate made circa 1560 of sixty women practitioners in the city at that time (only thirty years after the ending date of Gottfried's survey). Although this may be a slightly exaggerated figure, it still poses a striking contrast to Gottfried's total of twenty-eight women throughout the whole of England for the two previous centuries. In Norwich in the two decades between 1570 and 1590, ten women practitioners are known by name, again a high figure compared to the sparse medieval data gathered thus far (though still seemingly low for a town of 17,000 people).³⁵

Clearly, then, the definition of "medical practitioner" used in such studies must be as broad as possible if we are to catch more than a handful of women in our analytical net.³⁶ Yet prosopography

³³ Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster, "Medical Practitioners," in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 165–235, esp. 166.

³⁴ Obviously, changes in the type and amount of records available for the early modern period would contribute to these differential findings. This, however, does not warrant (and if anything, it counterindicates) drawing arguments from the silence of the medieval records.

³⁵ Pelling and Webster, 183–84, 222–26. Seven of the Norwich women were employed by the city corporation to perform a variety of cures; one was a licensed surgeon. Only one was explicitly referred to as "obstetrix," though one other woman was described more vaguely as a spinster "that helped women."

³⁶ A similar critique was made by Luke Demaitre in his review of Jacquart's, *Le milieu médical* (*Speculum* 58, no. 2 [April 1983]: 486–89, esp. 488), where he notes the complete absence from Jacquart's study of any *vetulae* ("old wives") "who appear so frequently in the literature." See also Jole Agrimi and Chiara Crisciani, "Medici e 'vetulae' dal duecento al quattrocento: Problemi di una ricerca," in *Cultura popolare e cultura dotta nel seicento: Atti del convegno di studio de Genova* (23–25 novembre 1982) (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1983), 144–59. An example of such *vetulae* is "a certain old woman" I discovered who had been called before King William (William the Conqueror or William Rufus?) to explain one of her cures. Cambridge, Trinity College MS 903 (R.14.30), 13th or 14th cent., fol. 121r (*olim* fol. 227r): "Quidam quartanarius a nullo medico liberari potuit cui quedam uetula succum

may have limitations even more fundamentally rooted in the method itself, which usually restricts the admissible data to persons known by name in order to properly individuate and identify them. The problem this poses for any study of women in the medieval period is obvious, for even when they are introduced into the historical record women are all too often nameless (witness the otherwise indistinguishable "Salernitan women").

In sum, while the prosopographical data do demonstrate the variety of women's medical practice in medieval Europe, because of their paucity they tell us little more. Indeed, such meager data have encouraged an unsatisfactory, anecdotal sort of history that unfortunately is still characteristic of the field.³⁷ There is, nevertheless, still hope of bringing greater nuance and sophistication to our understanding of medieval women healers. For this, we need to bring analyses developed in other areas of women's history into play as we explore the wider social context of women's health care and medical practice. We need, in short, to raise questions of power, of economic rivalry, of literacy and the control of knowledge. When these are set into a chronological framework, certain striking patterns emerge.

Professionalization and the restriction of women's medical practice

In her recent book on women's work in early modern Germany, Merry Wiesner argues that women's participation in health care was seen as "natural and proper, part of women's sphere." She goes on to claim that women working in health care were rarely viewed as economically, socially, or politically threatening.³⁸ Whether or not Wiesner's idyllic picture is accurate for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany,³⁹ the medieval data for the rest of Europe present no such uniform image of a clearly defined sexual division of labor that allowed women complete freedom of movement within their "natural

tapsi barbati tribus diebus ante accessionem dedit et statim liberatus est. Quam rex Williamus iussit uocari et confessa est quomodo fecit."

³⁷ See, e.g., Rowland (n. 1 above), introduction; and the works by Hughes and Labarge (n. 5 above).

³⁸ Merry E. Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 37. Wiesner's findings on midwives also appear (in somewhat expanded form) in "Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 94–113.

³⁹ Some of the evidence Wiesner presents calls her own picture into question. In *Working Women*, Wiesner recounts the persecution of female physicians, sur-

sphere” or that freed men from any threat of competition. On the contrary, medieval Europe was a battleground for all medical practitioners—women being caught in the crossfire—and it is here, not in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, that the foundations were laid for the eventual (though hardly inevitable) exclusion of women from independent medical practice.

Although its timing and degree of effectiveness varied greatly, most of western Europe witnessed the implementation of medical licensing by secular and religious authorities between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, medical practitioners themselves often banded together to form guilds or protective societies that attempted to control who could practice and under what conditions they could do so. These developments resulted in fierce tensions between physicians trained in the universities, surgeons and apothecaries trained by apprenticeship, and empirics with no formal training at all.⁴⁰ Viewed from the perspective of women, these first attempts to control nonuniversity-trained practitioners are notable in that they were initially sexually egalitarian. Why, then, at a certain historical moment should women have been explicitly singled out and excluded?

In France from the late thirteenth century on, physicians of the Parisian faculty of medicine made concerted efforts to control the medical practice of surgeons, barbers, and empirics. This led in 1322 to the oft-recounted trial of several unlicensed healers, including one Jacoba (or Jacquéline) Felicie who clearly was treating both women and men.⁴¹ A principal argument used by the prose-

geons, barbers, and empirics, noting that “during the course of the sixteenth century, many [German] cities passed regulations expressly forbidding ‘women and other untrained people’ to practice medicine in any way” (49–55, esp. 50).

⁴⁰ For a general discussion of these developments, see Vern Bullough, *The Development of Medicine as a Profession: The Contribution of the Medieval University to Modern Medicine* (Basel and New York: Karger, 1966); and Park, “Medicine and Society in Medieval Europe, 500–1500” (n. 3 above). How the process of the professionalization of medicine in late medieval Europe specifically affected women has never been thoroughly analyzed.

⁴¹ The best accounts of this trial are Eileen Power, “Some Women Practitioners of Medicine in the Middle Ages,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 15, no. 6 (April 1922): 20–23; and Pearl Kibre, “The Faculty of Medicine at Paris, Charlatanism and Unlicensed Medical Practice in the Later Middle Ages,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 27, no. 1 (January/February 1953): 1–20, reprinted in *Legacies in Law and Medicine*, ed. Chester R. Burns (New York: Science History Publications, 1977), 52–71, and in P. Kibre, *Studies in Medieval Science: Alchemy, Astrology, Mathematics and Medicine* (London: Hambledon, 1984), art. 13. A partial translation of the proceedings can be found in James Bruce Ross and Mary M. McLaughlin, eds., *The Portable Medieval Reader* (1949; reprint, New York: Viking, 1959), 635–40.

cution against Jacoba was that as it was forbidden for women to practice law, so much the more should they be barred from practicing medicine where their ignorance might result in a man's death rather than the simple loss of his case in court. Yet the statute of 1271 which Jacoba allegedly violated said nothing that restricted women more than men from medical practice. On the contrary, the statute was phrased in such a way that put the female surgeon, apothecary, or herbalist under the very same restrictions as her male counterpart⁴²—a formulation that assumes both that these women exist and that they have the possibility of meeting the same requirements as men in order to practice legally.⁴³

In Valencia, Luis Garcia Ballester and his colleagues have shown that prior to 1329 (and in some cities, even afterward) all the ordinances regulating medical practice simply applied to anyone “who has not learned the science of medicine, be they men or women, Christian, Jew, or Saracen.”⁴⁴ As they note, this precedent of “egalitarianism” makes the new law of 1329 all the more curious. It stipulated that “no woman may practice medicine or give potions, under penalty of being whipped through the town; but they may care for little children and women to whom, however, they may give no potion.”⁴⁵ Garcia Ballester and his coauthors suggest that this severe and unprecedented prohibition of women's practice may have been motivated by a simple desire to control the practice of

⁴² Henri Denifle, ed., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* (Paris, 1891–99; reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1964), 1:489: “Idcirco firmiter inhibemus ne aliquis chirurgicus seu cyrurgica, apothecarius seu apothecaria, herbarius seu herbaria per juramenta sua limites seu metas sui artificii clam vel palam seu qualitercunque excedere presumat.” A full translation of the statute can be found in Lynn Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 83–85.

⁴³ It is, of course, conceivable that the inclusive phrasing of the statute was motivated by a formulaic need to cover all possibilities rather than by a straightforward recognition of current realities; nevertheless, other sources leave no doubt that women were in fact practicing in these fields. The one field that was virtually closed to women was the practice of “physic” (general internal medicine), which was generally limited to those having attended a university, which normatively women could not do. Neither, however, could Jews or (in Spain) Muslims or even (in practical terms) most Christian men, so the emphasis on university education cannot be seen as a restriction directed solely toward women.

⁴⁴ Garcia Ballester, McVaugh, and Rubio Vela (n. 27 above). The text quoted is from an ordinance from the town of Valls, redacted in 1299 and again in 1319. Religious diversity did raise its own complications, however. In 1338, concern over the potentially corrupting influence of intimate contact between religious groups prompted a regulation that “any Saracen woman who acts as *metgessa* to women” could not bring a Christian woman into her house for treatment.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

gynecology and obstetrics by Muslim *metgesses*. We should not, however, overlook the fact that it is simultaneously excluding them (and all other women) from other forms of practice.⁴⁶

In England, where the physicians became organized only much later, it was not until 1421 that a petition was put before Parliament requesting, among other measures to ensure the physicians' hegemony, "that no Woman use the practyse of Fisyk [medicine] undre the same payne" of "long emprisonement" and a fine of forty pounds.⁴⁷ That this measure was ultimately ineffectual does not diminish the fact that the desire to prohibit women's medical practice was obviously real.

Interestingly, the one area of medicine generally thought of as "women's work," midwifery, was affected by the trend toward licensing only at the very end of the Middle Ages.⁴⁸ Currently there

⁴⁶ This law does not guarantee women a monopoly in gynecology and pediatrics, however, since the stipulation that women could not administer "potions" would, theoretically, have severely limited their independence of practice; any internal medicines (which were a major component of all medieval medical care) would have to be administered by a (male) physician.

⁴⁷ Power (n. 41 above), 23. Wiesner, *Working Women* (n. 38 above), argues that restrictions on women's practice in Germany came only in the sixteenth century.

⁴⁸ By "licensing" I mean the granting of official permission to practice according to prescribed regulations on training and ethical principles, which were usually assessed by means of examinations and/or oaths. This needs to be distinguished from other forms of official recognition of a practitioner's competence and/or right to practice. For example, the employment of midwives by municipal authorities to provide free or subsidized services to women of the city is known in Frankfurt am Main from 1302, in Nuremberg from 1381, in Basel from 1455, and in other German municipalities; see Gordon P. Elmeer, "The Regulation of German Midwifery in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries" (M.D. thesis, Yale University School of Medicine, 1964), esp. 8. Isaac De Meyer has similarly documented the employment of municipal midwives in Bruges from 1312; see Isaac De Meyer, *Recherches sur la pratique de l'art des accouchements à Bruges depuis le XIV^e siècle jusqu'à nos jours* (Bruges: 1843), 9–11. In France, the Hôtel Dieu of Paris was appointing midwives to work at its maternity hospital from at least 1378; see Richard L. Petrelli, "The Regulation of Midwifery during the *Ancien Régime*," *Journal of the History of Medicine and the Allied Sciences* 26, no. 3 (July 1971): 276–92, esp. 279. In the absence of licensing, however, criteria that might have been used to appoint these individuals would not necessarily have applied to other practitioners. In Frankfurt am Main, e.g., municipal midwives were first examined for their medical knowledge only in 1491, 189 years after the office was instituted; examination of other midwives began eight years later (Elmeer, 9). Licensing also needs to be distinguished from the employment of midwives as "expert witnesses" in legal proceedings to determine pregnancy or virginity. Indeed, it is not clear that it was only publicly recognized (let alone licensed) midwives who performed this function. In England from the early thirteenth century, legal determinations of pregnancy were conducted by juries of matrons, "lawful and discreet women," no mention being made of their medical knowledge; see Thomas R. Forbes, "A Jury of Matrons," *Medical History*

is no indication that medieval midwives attempted to organize or control themselves by means of guilds or other formal associations in the same way that many male practitioners did. On the contrary, all currently available data show that licensing, which apparently began in the mid-fifteenth century (the earliest known example is from Regensburg in 1452), was imposed on midwives from the outside, either by local municipal or ecclesiastical authorities, or by both.⁴⁹ Most of these early regulations were meant to control not the midwives' medical skills but, rather, their moral character. When these regulations do focus on strictly medical matters, they usually reflect an attempt to monitor, restrict, and control midwives' practice, often requiring them to turn first to other midwives and then to male physicians and surgeons for help.⁵⁰

32, no. 1 (January 1988): 23–33. Similarly, the committee of “matrones tres-expertes” appointed to confirm Joan of Arc’s virginity in 1431 consisted of aristocratic women rather than practicing midwives; see Thomas G. Benedek, “The Changing Relationship between Midwives and Physicians during the Renaissance,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 550–64, esp. 561.

⁴⁹ Histories of midwifery have mostly been limited to local or regional studies. For England, see J. H. Aveling, *English Midwives: Their History and Prospects* (1872; reprint, London: Hugh K. Elliott, 1967); and Thomas R. Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (1966; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1982). More recently, see the introductory chapter of Jean Donnison’s excellent study, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of Inter-Professional Rivalries and Women’s Rights* (New York: Schocken, 1977), which has in no way been superseded by Jean Towler and Joan Bramall, *Midwives in History and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1986). The first known English midwife’s license dates from 1588; see James Hitchcock, “A Sixteenth-century Midwife’s License,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 41, no. 1 (January–February 1967): 75–76. Studies on German-speaking territories abound: in addition to Elmeer, see Georg Burckhard, *Die deutschen Hebammenordnungen von ihren erstern Anfängen bis auf die Neuzeit* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1912), which prints the texts of many early German midwife ordinances; Elseuise Haberling, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hebammenstandes*, vol. 1, *Der Hebammenstand in Deutschland von seinen Anfängen bis zum Dreissigjährigen Krieg* (Berlin: Elwin Staude, 1940); Katharina Meyer, *Zur Geschichte des Hebammenwesens im Kanton Bern*, *Berner Beiträge zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften*, Neue Folge, 11 (Bern: Hans Huber, 1985); and Merry Wiesner’s studies (n. 38 above). Popular overviews can be found in Wolfgang Gubalke, *Die Hebamme im Wandel der Zeiten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Hebammenwesens* (Hannover: Elwin Staude, 1964), and Jean-Pierre Lefftz, *L’art des accouchements à Strasbourg et son rayonnement européen de la Renaissance au Siècle des Lumières* (Strasbourg: Editions Contades, 1985). In addition to De Meyer, data on midwives and women’s medical care in the late medieval Netherlands can be found in Myriam Greilsammer, “The Condition of Women in Flanders and Brabant at the End of the Middle-Ages” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1984).

⁵⁰ The controlling function of midwifery regulations has been pointed out with particular clarity by Dagmar Birkelbach, Christiane Eifert, and Sabine Lueken, “Zur

The timing of these midwifery regulations, which coincide with the first stirrings of the early modern wave of witch persecutions, has prompted several theses that argue for a direct connection between the two phenomena.⁵¹ These arguments suffer from numerous shortcomings, not least of which is the failure to distinguish between midwives and female medical practitioners in general or to recognize that midwives seem to have constituted no more than a minority of the women convicted of witchcraft. Richard and Ritta Jo Horsley have recently stressed the importance of distinguishing between "wise women" and midwives, and especially of distinguishing between official formulations of witchcraft theory and the actual beliefs of the people who made accusations against individual women.⁵² What little evidence for the medieval period that has been brought forward seems to support their conclusions, for despite the vitriolic accusations made against midwives in Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum* ("The Hammer of Witches") in 1486, the rhetoric of witchcraft seems to have been used not so much against midwives as against *vetulae* ("old women") and empirics, and even here it is not clear how widespread such accusations were.⁵³

Entwicklung des Hebammenwesens vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert am Beispiel der regensburger Hebammenordnungen," in *Frauengeschichte: Dokumentation des 3. Historikerinnentreffens in Bielefeld, April 1981* (Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1981), 83–98. See also Knibiehler and Fouquet (n. 6 above), esp. chap. 6; and Benedek (n. 48 above).

⁵¹ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1973); Gunnar Heinsohn and Otto Steiger, "The Elimination of Medieval Birth Control and the Witch Trials of Modern Times," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (May/June 1982): 193–214, and *Die Vernichtung der weisen Frauen: Beiträge zur Theorie und Geschichte von Bevölkerung und Kindheit* (Herbstein: März, 1985); and Anne Barstow, "Women as Healers, Women as Witches," *Old Westbury Review*, no. 2 (Fall 1986), 121–33.

⁵² Richard A. Horsley, "Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1979): 689–715; and Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives and the European Witch Hunts," in *Women in German Yearbook 3: Feminist Studies and German Culture*, ed. Mariane Burkhard and Edith Waldstein (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1987), 1–28.

⁵³ For a summary of Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer's accusations against midwives in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, see Towler and Bramall (n. 49 above), 33–39. Although they place their discussion of witches in a chapter entitled "The Dark Ages and Medieval Period," none of the texts Towler and Bramall cite associating witches and midwives predates Sprenger and Kramer's 1486 tract; most are from the sixteenth century. Although Wiesner (*Working Women*, n. 38 above) does not really tackle this issue directly, the rarity of prosecutions for witchcraft among the

This rapid survey of legislation and other attempts to restrict and control women's medical practice demonstrates the complexity of the tensions within the wider community of medical practitioners to which women belonged: tensions not only between male and female, but also between Christian and Jew (and in Spain, Muslim as well), between those in positions of political power (the physicians and, to a lesser extent, guild members) and those relatively lacking in power (empirics and "old women"). To these must also be added the often conflicting needs and goals of municipal, royal, and ecclesiastical authorities. These multiple axes of tension and rivalry make it particularly difficult to determine the true motives and causes of developments affecting women's medical practice. There is, however, one strand of this complex tapestry that makes the question of professionalization unique for women—the sexual division of labor. This is itself a difficult issue, but in order to address it briefly, let me explore one deceptively simple question: Who was responsible for the care of women?

legal cases involving midwives in early modern Germany suggests that the rhetoric of witchcraft was not normally used against midwives, who on the whole were a well-respected community. Wiesner mentions in passing some cases in Württemberg but stresses that "these are really witchcraft cases in which the woman accused *happened* to be a midwife" (69; emphasis added). On the association of *vetulae* and witchcraft, see Agrimi and Crisciani (n. 36 above); and, in the same volume, Paola Zambelli, "Vetula quasi strix?" 160–63. For documents on several such women, see Josep Perarnau i Espelt, "Activitats i fórmules supersticioses de guarició a Catalunya en la primera meitat del segle XIV," *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics* 1 (1982): 47–78, which includes the case of Geralda Codines, who was brought in for questioning in 1304, 1307, and again in 1328 in Barcelona. Clearly quite knowledgeable about general medical theory, Geralda was questioned about her use of religious charms and prayers in her medical practice. (I am indebted to Michael McVaugh for bringing this article to my attention.) Other studies on women's medical practice provide only random incidents of alleged magical practices: Charles Talbot ("Dame Trot and Her Progeny," *Essays and Studies* [The English Association], n.s., 25 [1972]: 1–14, esp. 13–14) cites the case of a Viennese woman who in 1470 was forced to confess that she had practiced medicine "having been deceived by the devil." A. L. Wyman, "The Surgeoness: The Female Practitioner of Surgery, 1400–1800," *Medical History* 28, no. 1 (January 1984): 22–41, cites the Act of 1511 in England, by which physicians tried to limit the practice of empirics (27). The preamble to the act condemns "Women [who] boldly and accustomedly take upon them great Cures, and things of great difficulty, in the which they partly use Sorcery and Witchcraft." Wyman notes, however, that a later act in 1542 removed many of these restrictions, allowing "divers honest men and women" to carry on their practice unimpeded. Only two witches, Margaret Neale and Elizabeth Clerke, are mentioned in Pelling and Webster's survey of sixteenth-century London and Norwich practitioners (n. 33 above, 231–32).

The care of women and the sexual division of labor

Up till now, the standard answer, as I stated at the outset of this essay, has been unequivocal: "women's health was women's business." In this vein, Charles Talbot has argued that at least in the case of the women practicing at Salerno, "It seems quite clear that [women's medical practice] was restricted to the fields of gynecology and paediatrics, in which medical men showed no interest."⁵⁴ Talbot thus envisions a simple sexual division of labor: women treated women, men treated men—the unambiguous line of sex (of both the patient and the practitioner) defining whose turf was whose, with neither men nor women desiring to cross that divide. (How Talbot imagined women's nongynecological problems were treated is unclear.) Obviously, the evidence for women practitioners surveyed above already casts serious doubt on these assumptions. To judge from Trota's genuine work, for example, her practice was not so limited as Talbot imagines, for only about one-quarter of it deals with gynecological or obstetrical concerns, the rest of the text being devoted to various ailments such as fevers, wounds, and internal disorders.⁵⁵ Similarly, the Italian and Spanish data indicate that, even for those female physicians and surgeons who were restricted by their license to treating only women, their practice was rarely limited to just gynecological or obstetrical problems.⁵⁶

But even if we restrict our discussion to gynecological and obstetrical care, can we still maintain that "women's health was women's business" and particularly that it was *midwives'* business? Let me return to the issue of definition I addressed briefly above. Thus far, I have been treating the term "midwife" as if its definition were commonly agreed upon and unproblematic. Yet if "midwife" was

⁵⁴ Talbot, 2.

⁵⁵ See Benton (n. 22 above), 41. Professor Benton was kind enough to share with me his transcription of Trota's *Practica* which he was in the process of editing at the time of his death. Of the other Salernitan women noted for their writings, Abella was said to have written *On Black Bile* and *On the Nature of the Seed*, Rebecca Guarna *On Fevers*, *On Urines*, and *On the Fetus*, and Mercuriade *On Critical Days*, *On Pestilential Fever*, *On the Care of Wounds*, and *On Unguents*; see De Renzi (n. 22 above), 1:372–73. As with Trota, these attributions need to be reconfirmed in accordance with modern scholarly standards.

⁵⁶ It is important to stress, however, that modern Western medical beliefs about what does or does not constitute a condition or disorder of the reproductive system were not necessarily shared by medieval people. Work on medieval theories of female physiology and disease (as represented in medical literature) suggests that the spectrum of diseases thought to have their origin in the reproductive system was very broad indeed; see Green, "Transmission" (n. 7 above).

not simply a generic name for any female practitioner, how did medieval people actually define it?⁵⁷ Was it someone who assisted women with all their medical problems or just with those having to do with the reproductive organs? Or was this role even more narrowly defined as someone who assisted only with birth itself, leaving all prenatal and postpartum conditions to the care of others? Was the midwife a woman who functioned independently, or was she subservient to another (perhaps male) practitioner? Was she, indeed, always a woman? Was her role exclusive, that is, did she have a monopoly on whatever it was she did, or did she face competition from other healers? Was “midwife” a term used to refer to someone formally trained as a healer, or was it used more loosely to designate a woman who, in a specific situation, merely performed the function of “standing by” at birth (the original sense of the Latin term, *obstetrix*)?⁵⁸ Was there, in fact, any single definition of “midwife” in medieval Europe, or was it, rather, a variable concept whose definition changed in different social and medical contexts?

Michel Salvat, one of the few scholars to have raised the question of definition, found the following description of the midwife's function in the thirteenth-century Latin encyclopedia of Bartholomew the Englishman (which was subsequently translated into various

⁵⁷ Michel Salvat (“L'accouchement dans la littérature scientifique médiévale,” *Senefiance* 9 [1980]: 87–106) distinguishes between midwifery as a simple activity that would be the shared responsibility of kinswomen and neighbors, and midwifery as a true craft or profession in which certain women would specialize and on which they would rely for income. In other words, this distinction would be between *midwives* (i.e., acknowledged specialists) and *midwifery* (i.e., a simple stock of skills and knowledge that was freely and informally shared among the whole community of women—and perhaps even some men). Salvat argues that informal, familial traditions of medical care predominated throughout most of the Middle Ages, whereas the midwife strictly defined cannot be found before the second half of the thirteenth century and then only as an urban phenomenon. This proposed chronology (which is based solely on French evidence) is probably a conservative estimate since it refers to when professional midwives first appear in the historical records. Nevertheless, Salvat is probably right to stress the urban aspects of midwives' practice, since any type of specialization requires a minimum concentration of population to support it. A profitable contrast might be made with the abundant evidence for professional midwives in the highly urbanized world of antiquity; see, e.g., the literature cited in Valerie French, “Midwives and Maternity Care in the Greco-Roman World,” in *Rescuing Creusa: New Methodological Approaches to Women in Antiquity*, a special issue of *Helios* edited by Marilyn Skinner, n.s. 13, no. 2 (1987): 69–84; and Green, “*Obstetrices*” (n. 7 above).

⁵⁸ Adrian Wilson raises similar issues of the complexity of definition in his study of eighteenth-century male midwifery; see “William Hunter and the Varieties of Man-Midwifery,” in *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-century Medical World*, ed. W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 343–69.

vernacular languages): "A midwife [Latin, *obstetrix*; Italian, *obstetris*; Provençal, *levayritz*; Spanish, *partera*; French, *ventriere*] is a woman who possesses the art of aiding a woman in birth so that [the mother] might give birth more easily and the infant might not incur any danger. . . . She also receives the child as it emerges from the womb."⁵⁹ This would seem to conform with the most narrow definition above, yet Salvat does not mention that Bartholomew's passage occurs within the context of a larger discussion of the "ages of man" where there is no reference whatsoever to women's general health care.⁶⁰ Nor does Salvat examine the profound implications of this definition for the actual treatment of women. Looked at from the perspective of the patient, the midwife of Bartholomew's definition (if taken literally) provides an extremely limited service: both before and after the baby is born, the woman must call on some other health care provider for all her medical needs.

One might contrast Bartholomew's concept of the role of the midwife with that found in the sixth-century gynecological work of Muscio, which circulated throughout the Middle Ages. Here it is assumed that midwives (*obstetrices*) would be responsible for *all* gynecological and obstetrical concerns—a definition that would consequently have radically different ramifications for the woman patient.⁶¹

Neither of these definitions may be fully representative of medieval understandings of the term (Muscio because he reflects late antique realities more than medieval, Bartholomew because of the limited context of his discussion), yet their agreements and disagreements are instructive. Both take it for granted that the midwife is a woman,⁶² and both identify the midwife as a trained healer who specializes in the care of other women's reproductive concerns. They disagree, however, on how extensive that province of specialty is. Most interestingly, neither definition either states or implies that the midwife's province of medical practice is exclusively hers,⁶³ an

⁵⁹ Salvat, 90–91, 101.

⁶⁰ "Man" as Bartholomew uses it is ostensibly meant to refer to humans, though the specificity of most of his discussion suggests that he is really just talking about the male.

⁶¹ Valentin Rose, ed., *Sorani Gynaeciorum vetus translatio latina* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1882), 6: "What is a midwife? A woman learned in all the diseases of women, and also expert in medical practice" (*Quid est obstetrix? femina omnium muliebrium causarum docta, etiam medicinali exercitatione perita*).

⁶² The grammatical gender of all the terms for "midwife" in the various European languages is feminine.

⁶³ There are other indications in Muscio's text that obstetrics and gynecology are definitely not the exclusive monopoly of midwives; see Green, "Obstetrices" (n. 7 above).

issue of monopoly that is important for a proper historical understanding not only of midwives' practice (which might have faced competition from or subordination to other practitioners) but also of the options available to women patients when they had to choose a medical attendant.⁶⁴ If midwives did not have a monopoly on the whole field of obstetrics and gynecology (and if my assumption is accepted that a constant need for this care existed), then obviously there must have been other practitioners caring for women. Who, then, were they?

Those who argue that "women's health was women's business" assume that the treatment of women, especially for "women's diseases," constituted the exclusive domain of women practitioners either because of social convention or because (as Talbot would argue) male practitioners simply lacked interest in such matters. There is, in fact, evidence to support both these views. Many of the Italian licenses that limited women to a female clientele stipulated that this was done for reasons of propriety, as it was more seemly that women be treated by other women than by men.⁶⁵ As for male practitioners' lack of interest in women's affairs, Beryl Rowland cites the statement of the fourteenth-century French surgeon, Guy de Chauliac, who remarked on the topic of multiple births that "because the matter requires the attention of women, there is no point in giving much consideration to it."⁶⁶

Yet despite certain indications to the contrary, women were not immune to male competition even in the field considered "naturally" theirs. When Jacoba Felicie argued that she should be allowed to continue her practice on the grounds that as a female she would not threaten women's modesty, the court dismissed her arguments as "worthless" and "frivolous."⁶⁷ That the medical faculty refused to engage in a debate about sexual "propriety" strongly suggests that they were not willing to so easily cede the treatment

⁶⁴ The choice of medical attendant may, of course, have been made not by the woman herself but by her husband or male guardian; this is another question in need of study.

⁶⁵ See Münster, "Women Doctors" (n. 18 above), 139; and Talbot (n. 53 above), 11–13. While it could be argued that this enforced specialization would have the benefit of encouraging practitioners to learn the peculiar anatomy and physiology of their female patients better, in the case of many practitioners (e.g., the woman eye surgeon mentioned by Calvanico [n. 25 above] who worked in a field where sex specialization would hardly seem relevant or medically useful), it must have simply limited their potential clientele and hence their economic viability.

⁶⁶ Rowland (n. 1 above), 24.

⁶⁷ Denifle, ed. (n. 42 above), 2:267. Jacoba may have used this argument simply for its rhetorical force since obviously it would not have justified her practice on male patients.

of female patients to women practitioners.⁶⁸ Indeed, contrary to Talbot's claim that gynecology was a field "in which medical men showed no interest," there is abundant evidence that male practitioners *were* interested in the care of women's reproductive health. This becomes readily apparent from an examination of medieval gynecological literature.

Texts and audiences

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Scipione Mercurio received advice on how to ensure a successful career as a physician in Venice. All he needed to know, he was told, were two things: how to get on well with pharmacists and how to make women fertile.⁶⁹ The potential for profit in gynecological practice was not lost on Mercurio's medieval predecessors. In her superb study of the medical careers of a group of north Italian male physicians of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Nancy Siraisi has found evidence that the treatment of gynecological problems was often a fundamental part of their practice. In the writings of a leading Bolognese physician, Taddeo Alderotti, Siraisi notes a "large number of gynecological remedies and cosmetics . . . [which] perhaps implies an extensive practice among women and a situation in which upper-class males were prepared to spend frequently and generously for the medical treatment of their wives and daughters."⁷⁰

Another recent work that demonstrates the gynecological activity of male physicians is Helen Lemay's study of the *Treatise on the Womb* by a fifteenth-century Pavian professor of medicine, Anthonius Guainerius.⁷¹ Lemay convincingly argues that Guainerius was actively involved in the medical care of women, diagnosing and treating them for a variety of gynecological ailments both di-

⁶⁸ Although it is unlikely that this ever happened (though compare Clarice, the Italian eye surgeon mentioned in n. 25 above), the argument of modesty could, if carried to its logical extreme, preclude men from treating any of women's medical problems, not simply those of "the shameful parts."

⁶⁹ Richard Palmer, "Pharmacy in the Republic of Venice in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Medical Renaissance of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. A. Wear, R. K. French, and I. M. Lonie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 100–117, esp. 105.

⁷⁰ Nancy G. Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and His Pupils: Two Generations of Italian Medical Learning* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 279–80, 282–83, esp. 278. An individual case history of a gynecological problem is discussed in Ynez Violé O'Neill, "Michael Scot and Mary of Bologna: A Medieval Gynecological Puzzle," *Clio Medica* 8, no. 2 (June 1973): 87–111, and 9, no. 2 (June 1974): 125–29.

⁷¹ Lemay (n. 8 above).

rectly and through the use of midwives as his assistants.⁷² Lemay's reading of Guainerius's treatise does not, however, exhaust the questions that need to be asked if this fascinating document is to tell us all it can about women's medical care and practice in this period.

For example, the question of rivalry between different medical practitioners could be addressed with far greater nuance. Lemay writes that "Guainerius clearly recognizes the necessity of distinguishing himself from the lay healer"—a concern Lemay attributes to "professional decorum."⁷³ To treat a certain disorder, Guainerius recommends that whereas "old women" use burned hair and feathers, the physician ought instead to use asafetida or castoreum. What Lemay does not realize (but which Guainerius clearly did) is that the distinction between these two sets of medicinal substances is solely economic: hair and feathers are valueless yet readily available, while asafetida and castoreum can be obtained only at considerable cost; all of these substances had been recommended in virtually every medical account of this disease from antiquity on.⁷⁴ Guainerius's innovation was to use something as seemingly neutral as *materia medica* to construct a social distinction between himself and a "lower" class of healers who in reality practice a medicine not so very different from his own.

Also crucial to understanding Guainerius's text is an analysis of its intended purpose and audience. The title itself is revealing: it is called a "Treatise on the Womb," not "On the Diseases of Women." This reductive focus is clearly evident in Guainerius's dedicatory preface to Filippo Maria, the duke of Milan: this is a treatise motivated not by a concern for the suffering of women (though Guainerius is not indifferent to this) but by an explicitly male desire for progeny.⁷⁵ Guainerius's treatise, obviously written with the self-serving goal of his own social advancement, is rife with subtle

⁷² Lemay notes a similar relationship between male physician and female midwife in her study of the thirteenth-century physician, William of Saliceto (Helen Lemay, "William of Saliceto on Human Sexuality," *Viator* 12 [1981]: 165–81). I do not see, however, how the midwife's role as manual assistant to the physician demonstrates that she had "ultimate responsibility for the practice of gynecology and obstetrics in thirteenth-century Italy" (181). As Lemay herself notes, according to William, the midwife even had to be taught the anatomy of the vagina by the physician (180).

⁷³ Lemay, "Anthonius Guainerius" (n. 8 above), 326–27.

⁷⁴ Compare Green, "Transmission" (n. 7 above).

⁷⁵ I have examined a microfilm copy of Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS A 108 inf., at Notre Dame University. The apparent popularity of the work suggests that Guainerius struck a responsive chord among the patriciate of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. There are at least fourteen extant manuscripts dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The work was also printed at least three times before 1500.

polemics that, though they make interpretation more difficult, have a great deal to tell us about why male practitioners were interested in reproductive medicine. My point, then, is that Guainerius was writing within the context of a specific social and cultural environment that subtly pervaded even the most technical aspects of his work; understanding that environment is crucial to making proper sense of his medicine and of the way he describes his relations with other practitioners and his own patients.

Peter Biller offers other examples of male interest in gynecological and obstetrical matters, bringing up many of the complex issues of the relations between medieval males (scientific writers, practicing physicians, and even clergy) and midwives.⁷⁶ Biller refers (somewhat hyperbolically) to "the massive presence in the west of learned books" that describe how birth ought to be handled, noting, however, the possible disjunction between such learned discussions (of which there is abundant evidence) and orally transmitted midwifery (about which there is virtually none). Even so, male medical literature was not simply scholastic speculation, Biller argues, but was derived at least in part from actual practice or discussion with midwives and was intended, in its turn, to be used to instruct them. He cites the Dominican friar Thomas of Cantimpré (d. ca. 1280), for example, who included discussion of midwifery in his general encyclopedia of learning "because of the danger of still-births and the ignorance of midwives. . . . We exhort therefore . . . that they [those with care of souls] should call together some more discerning midwives, *and train them in secret*, and others may be trained by them" (my emphasis).⁷⁷

There are many other instances in medieval medical literature that prove the active interest in gynecological matters among male practitioners.⁷⁸ Even obstetrics was not beyond the pale of male

⁷⁶ Peter Biller, "Childbirth in the Middle Ages," *History Today* 36 (August 1986): 42–49.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

⁷⁸ Much of this material has been collected in the undeservedly neglected article of Carl Oskar Rosenthal, "Zur geburtshilflich gynaekologischen Betätigung des Mannes bis zum Ausgange des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Janus* 27 (1923): 117–48. For the text of a criminal inquest, held in 1326, against a male practitioner accused of gynecological malpractice, see Joseph Shatzmiller and Rodrigue Lavoie, "Médecine et gynécologie au moyen-âge: Un exemple provençal," *Razo: Cahiers du Centre d'Études Médiévales de Nice*, no. 4 (Nice: Université de Nice, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1984), 133–43. The story of a miracle at St. Thomas à Becket's shrine involves a parish priest who personally observed a difficult birth and gave technical advice to the midwife; cited in Peter Biller, "Birth-Control in the West in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries," *Past and Present*, no. 94 (February 1982), 3–26, esp. 19, n. 69. Biller also cites evidence of priests' manuals which depict the priest as a source of advice on breast feeding and child care.

interest, as indicated by the quotation from Thomas of Cantimpré. Indeed, despite his dismissive statement that there was “no point” in giving attention to certain matters of birth, Guy de Chauliac himself nevertheless saw it as his duty to advise both the mother and the midwife on what they ought to do in case of difficulties.⁷⁹ However, as I already suggested in the case of Anthonius Guainerius, it must be kept very clearly in mind that this is, after all, literature, and if we are to treat it as historical evidence we need to subject it to the same analyses as any other form of literary material meant to inform and persuade its audience, keeping in mind all the various ways in which language can hide or misrepresent reality. How much, for instance, do these writings reflect real experience, and how much are they simply reiterating beliefs and practices the authors have found in other writings? How much, in other words, of what we find in these texts is merely “armchair gynecology”? What role do rhetoric and polemic play, and how are we to filter out their influences? Who wrote this literature? And even more important, who read it?

John Benton has argued that the gynecological treatises ultimately attributed to “Trotula” were written both by and for men. Further, he argues that the false attribution to a woman author was equally an indication of and an aid toward the takeover of “women’s medicine” by male physicians and the gradual exclusion of women themselves from medical practice.⁸⁰ I believe, however, that the “victimization” of women both as practitioners and as patients was not so absolute as Benton supposes; particularly, I believe it is incumbent upon us to distinguish between the purpose with which a text is written and the purpose to which it is later put. This distinction is absolutely crucial if we are to determine the relationship women—either as practitioners or patients—had to gynecological literature.

One critical problem in Benton’s thesis that the “Trotula” texts were written for men is that he does not explain the meaning of the preface to the longest of the three works, the *Cum auctor* (or *Trotula major*). In that preface, the author (who very well may have been male) states her or his reasons for writing. Recounting the numerous reasons why women are afflicted with diseases of their reproductive organs, she or he adds that “shame-faced on account

⁷⁹ See the text of the *Cyrurgie*, ed. Margaret Ogden (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1971), 529–32, for Guy’s discussion of gynecological and obstetrical ailments.

⁸⁰ Benton (n. 22 above), esp. 48–52.

of their fragile condition and the diseases which afflict them in such a private place, women do not dare reveal their distress to a male physician." It was out of recognition of their misfortune (and particularly "for the sake of a certain woman") that she or he was impelled to write the book.⁸¹

If women "do not dare reveal their distress to a male physician," how could the author possibly intend that this work be solely for the use of male physicians? While it is conceivable that the work was meant to educate male physicians so that they would not have to press a woman patient with questions she was too embarrassed to answer, it is also conceivable (and to my mind quite plausible) that the author meant her or his work to be read by women themselves; who actually did read it and who controlled its later transmission is an entirely different matter. Benton notes the condescension and distancing with which the author speaks of both women patients and midwives, yet these same features can be found in the sixth-century work of Muscio that was very clearly intended to be used by midwives.⁸² Furthermore, Benton himself concedes that the short work on cosmetics also attributed to "Trotula" was written explicitly for women.⁸³ If, as this one instance suggests, men were willing to write texts specifically for women and women were eager (and able) to read them,⁸⁴ why could this not be true of the gynecological texts as well? This problem of intended audience becomes all the more difficult when we turn to the multitude of vernacular gynecological treatises dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

An anonymous late medieval Flemish translation of the "Trotula" texts has recently been edited by Anna Delva, who argues that the translation was made by a practicing midwife critical of

⁸¹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 7056, fol. 77r: "Et ipse conditionis fragilitatis rubore faciei egritudinum suarum que in secretiori loco eis accidit, medico angustias reuelare non audent. Earum igitur miseranda calamitas et maxime cuiusdam mulieris gratia animum meum sollicitans impulit ut contra egritudines earum euidentiùs explanarem." Although this passage was subject to frequent scribal alteration in the manuscripts, its sense remains substantially the same.

⁸² Benton, 46; compare Green, "*Obstetrices*" (n. 7 above).

⁸³ Benton, 48.

⁸⁴ Little is known about women's literacy in the Middle Ages, especially among women outside the cloister. On the one hand, it would be presumptuous simply to assume, without positive evidence, that women were illiterate. On the other hand, even in the case of a woman author such as Trota, we cannot be sure that she was literate, since it is possible that she dictated her work rather than writing it herself. Still, we should not dismiss this realm of "quasi-literacy"; even if women "wrote" only by dictating and "read" only by having works read to them, they were still functionally participating in literate culture.

male university masters.⁸⁵ Various translations of “Trotula” and other Latin sources were also made into Irish, French, English, German, and Italian, and at least one entirely new gynecological tract was composed in Italian.⁸⁶ The English translator of the “Trotula” makes explicit the value of the vernacular: “Because whomen of oure tonge donne bettyr rede and undyrstande thys langage than eny other and every whoman lettyrde rede hit to other unlettyrd and help hem and conceyle hem in her maledyes, withowtyn shewyng here dysse to man, i have thys drauyn and wrytyn in englysh.”⁸⁷

How are we to explain the contemporaneous appearance of “men’s texts” such as Guainerius’s and “women’s texts” like these vernacular ones? Are the vernacular texts addressed to women an active response, as Delva would argue, by women themselves to the increasing male intrusion into gynecological affairs? If so, did only women read them?

⁸⁵ Anna Delva, *Vrouwengeneeskunde in Vlaanderen tijdens de late middeleeuwen*, Vlaamse Historische Studies 2 (Brugge: Genootschap voor Geschiedenis, 1983). This edition is not without its defects; see the (excessively hostile) review by Albert Derolez in *Scriptorium* 38, no. 1 (1984): 175–77. Delva provides a French résumé of her conclusions on 201–6. Here she repeats the argument that “women’s health was women’s business”: “Enfin notre étude a établi avec certitude que jusqu’à environ [...] 1550 tous les aspects de la médecine pour les femmes étaient confiés à des femmes” (205). Male involvement, she argues, was solely theoretical or in the guise of counsel offered in emergency situations.

⁸⁶ See Benton, nn. 12 and 52, for references to these works. To this list can be added B. Kusche, *Das Frauenbild in Gebrauchsprosatexten aus dem 15. Jahrhundert* (3 mittelniederländische Handschriften gynäkologisch-obstetrischen inhaltes) (Stockholm: Deutsches Institut, 1982). An unedited Italian text on the diseases of the breasts exists in MS 38 of the Boston Medical Library. Another Italian text (mistakenly identified in the catalog as a translation of pseudo-Cleopatra) is found in London, Wellcome Institute Library, MS misc. med. II; like the English text it, too, is intended “maximamente per le done [sic]” (fol. 64r). On the general question of the use of the vernacular for gynecological texts, see Audrey Eccles, “The Early Use of English for Midwiferies, 1500–1700,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 78, no. 4 (1977): 377–85. Faye Marie Getz (“Gilbertus Anglicus Anglicized,” *Medical History* 26, no. 4 [October 1982]: 436–42) has some useful cautions about assuming too much about the class or even the profession of the readers of vernacular medical literature. The problematic question of male vs. female audiences is also addressed in the recent editions of two early modern German translations of the *Secreta mulierum* (falsely attributed to Albertus Magnus), which seems to have been intended, not as a practical gynecological text, but as a “natural history of women” to inform curious male audiences. (One, the version of Hartlieb, was definitely intended for the use of the aristocracy, while the other was probably intended for the urban bourgeoisie.) See Kristian Bosseman-Cyran, ed., “*Secreta mulierum*” mit Glosse in der deutschen Bearbeitung von Johann Hartlieb (Pattensen/Hannover: Horst Wellm, 1985); and Margaret Schleissner, “Pseudo-Albertus Magnus: *Secreta mulierum cum commento*, Deutsch. Critical text and commentary” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1987).

⁸⁷ As cited in Rowland (n. 1 above), 14.

One of the fifteenth-century Middle English works, transcribed by Beryl Rowland, begins with a preface which, like that of the *Trotula major*, mentions women's reluctance to bare their ills to a male doctor, although in this case the intended audience is explicitly declared: "Because there are many women who have numerous illnesses—some of them almost fatal—and because they are also ashamed to reveal and tell their distress to any man, I therefore shall write somewhat to cure their illness. . . . And so, to assist women, I intend to write of how to help their secret maladies so that one woman may aid another in her illness and not divulge her secrets to such discourteous men."⁸⁸ In addition to its intriguing preface, the intended audience of this anonymous text is further indicated, Rowland argues, by the inclusion of material on obstetrics—a topic that (she believes) was of little interest to men and was not usually found in standard medical texts.⁸⁹ From this, Rowland suggests that at this time "women were the sole obstetricians," arguing further that "the debt to the experience of women, whether such material was originally recorded orally or written down, is obvious throughout the work."⁹⁰

Rowland edited her text from only one of at least six manuscripts now extant, two of which are identical to the copy she used in all substantive details.⁹¹ The other three are exemplars of a second version of the text; a transcription of one of these latter manuscripts has now been produced by M.-R. Hallaert.⁹² Although both Row-

⁸⁸ Ibid., 59. This edition is marred by numerous errors of presentation and interpretation. The reader wishing to make use of it should refer to the important critiques in the reviews by Jerry Stannard and Linda Voigts, *Speculum* 57, no. 2 (April 1982): 422–26; Nancy Siraisi, *American Historical Review* 87, no. 2 (April 1982): 435–36; and Faye Marie Getz, *Medical History* 26, no. 3 (July 1982): 353–54. For some reason, Rowland insists on calling her text an "English Trotula" even though she knew it was not an English translation of the Latin *Trotula* texts (48). Peter M. Jones (*Medieval Medical Miniatures* [London: British Library, 1984], 54) has now demonstrated that Rowland's text is for the most part a translation from the Latin of a general book on practical medicine by Roger Baron. Copies of the "genuine" Middle English translation of *Trotula* (actually, a compilation made from *Trotula* and other texts) can be found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Bodleian 438 and Douce 37; and London, British Library, MSS Additional 12195 and Sloane 421A. All have an incipit more or less as follows: "Our Lord God when he had stored the world" (cf. *Trotula major*: "Cum auctor universitatis deus in prima mundi origine").

⁸⁹ Rowland, 23–26.

⁹⁰ Ibid., vxi.

⁹¹ Rowland transcribed London, British Library MS Sloane 2463. Other manuscripts with the same text are London, British Library, MS Sloane 249, and London, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, MS 129 a.i.5.

⁹² See M. R. Hallaert, *The 'Sekenesse of wymmen': A Middle English Treatise on Diseases of Women*, Scripta: Mediaeval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, no.

land and Hallaert knew of the existence of these other manuscripts, neither made any attempt to compare them systematically with the copy each transcribed.⁹³ Had they done so, they might have realized that the two versions of this text together have a lot more to tell us about the creation and dissemination of gynecological knowledge than a superficial reading would suggest.

The second version of this Middle English text (which for convenience I will call "Hallaert's version") not only is rearranged in parts and substantially "abbreviated," but it also lacks much of the obstetrical material (including the illustrations of the fetus in utero) and other sections found in the first version ("Rowland's version"; see table 1).⁹⁴ Most important, Hallaert's version lacks the poignant, almost feminist preface that was the sole *explicit* indicator in Rowland's version that women were the intended audience. Without the preface, the text becomes superficially "neutral." The scribe of one manuscript in Hallaert's version, however, had a very clear idea of who his (or her) audience would be and emended the text accordingly: she or he simply began "*Sirs*, we shall understand that women's bodies have less heat" (emphasis added).⁹⁵

How are we to explain the simultaneous existence of the two versions of this text, one (Rowland's) ostensibly a "women's version," the other (Hallaert's) a neutral or "men's version"? Which came first, and who appropriated from whom? These, unfortunately, are questions that must wait until a competent specialist in Middle English can produce a critical edition of all the manuscripts and determine the text's origins.⁹⁶ It is not necessary to know which version was prior, however, to see that Rowland's claim that "the debt to the experience of women . . . is obvious throughout the work" is unfounded, for the obstetrical material, no less than many other parts of the text, clearly derives in large part from previous Latin sources—all of them (in those cases where authorship can be de-

8 (Brussels: Omirel, URSAL, 1982), which is a transcription of New Haven, Connecticut, Yale Medical Library, MS 47. Other copies of the same text are London, British Library, MSS Royal 18A.VI and Sloane 5.

⁹³ Both Rowland (47) and Hallaert (20) do nothing more than refer vaguely to "similarities" or "resemblances."

⁹⁴ I say "first," "second," and "abbreviated" only provisionally since at this point it is impossible to know which version is original and which represents the alterations of a later medieval editor.

⁹⁵ London, British Library, MS Sloane 5, fol. 158r: "*Sires*, we shulle vnderstonde that womene hau lesse hete."

⁹⁶ This task will be greatly aided by the catalog of all medical and scientific writings in Middle English currently being prepared by Linda Voigts, Department of English, University of Missouri at Kansas City.

TABLE I **COMPARISON OF MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS EDITED BY ROWLAND^a
AND HALLAERT^b**

Middle English Text ^c	Page Numbers	
	Rowland	Hallaert
For as muche as ther ben manye women [preface]	58	[lacking]
Therefore ye schal understonde [text of treatise proper]	58	27–29 ^d
Withholdyng of this blode	60–64	29–33
For to helpe women of these sekenesses	66–70	33–39
Good electuaries for this sekenesse	70	39
Also a worschipfull serip	70–74	[lacking]
To moche flowyng of blode	74–86	43–49
Suffocacion of the moder is when	86–96	49–55
The precipitacioun of the moder	98–104	55–59
Moche wynde ther is also in the moder	104–8	59–61
Ydropsie of the moder	108–10	41
A good suppositorie to purgen the moder	110–12	41
The moder semyth ofte flayne & rawe	112–14	41
Apostume of the moder	114–18	61–65
Ache of the moder	118–20	65–67
Yff a woman be with childe	120–22	[lacking]
Greuaunces that women haue in bering [includes 17 figures of fetus in utero]	122–34	[lacking]
And the greuaunces that women have in beryng	134–38	67–71
Mola matricis is in two maners	140–44	[lacking]
Secondine is a litell skynne	144–46	71–73
Fyrst, yf she be repleted	146	[lacking]
The women that bleden otherwhiles	146–48	73
Woundes of the marice	148–50	65 [one-tenth of text]
Cancryng and festres of the marice	150–52	65 [approx- imately one- third of text]
Women whan they ben with childe	152	[lacking]

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Middle English Text ^a	Page Numbers	
	Rowland	Hallaert
(Several pages of Latin text on such topics as provoking the menses, anaphrodisiacs, tumors of the breasts)	152–62	[lacking]
(Several more pages of Middle English recipes)	162–72	[lacking]

^aBeryl Rowland, *Medieval Woman's Guide to Health: The First English Gynecological Handbook* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1981). Rowland's text is based on only one manuscript of the work: London, British Library, MS Sloane 2463. The same text is also found in London, British Library, MS Sloane 249, and London, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, MS 129 a.i.5.

^bM.-R. Hallaert, *The "Sekenesse of wymmen": A Middle English Treatise on Diseases of Women*, Scripta: Mediaeval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, no. 8 (Brussels, 1982), a reproduction and transcription of the text in New Haven, Connecticut, Yale Medical Library, MS 47. Two other copies also exist of this version: London, British Library, MSS Sloane 5 and Royal 18A.VI.

^cThe Middle English chapter incipits (i.e., opening phrases) cited are those of Rowland's text.

^dAlthough it lacks a preface, Sloane 5 nevertheless makes its intended audience explicit: "Sires, we shulle vnderstonde" (fol. 158r; emphasis added).

terminated) written by men. Aside from two unnamed women said to have cured their own illnesses, no women are ever mentioned as authorities in the text.⁹⁷ Nor, aside from the preface, is the text in any way addressed to either women patients or midwives; both are referred to solely in the third person. All second-person references and imperatives are reserved for the practitioner reading the book who, apparently, is assumed to be neither laywoman nor midwife.⁹⁸ In what sense, then, whether we talk about its audience or its sources, can we unambiguously speak of this work as a "medieval woman's guide to health"? Clearly, this was a text shared (fought over?) by men and women, and it reflects men's accumulated knowledge of gynecological and obstetrical medicine as much as (if not more than) women's. Even if the text was originally intended for women,⁹⁹ the fact that the manuscript Rowland edited is known to

⁹⁷ Rowland, 110/111 and 144/145. Although "Trotula" is mentioned (168/169), it is not clear whether the author understood the word to be a woman's name or simply the title of a text; the name "Lilie" on 102/103 is not a woman but rather a reference to the *Lilium medicinae*, a general textbook of medicine by Bernard of Gordon. The male authorities cited are not merely the traditional figures (e.g., the Arabic authors, Avicenna and Rhazes); on pp. 76/77, e.g., a remedy for uterine flux is described which was taught to a woman by the prior of Bermondesey!

⁹⁸ Although, as I suggested earlier in reference to the *Trotula major* and Muscio, this does not entirely exclude the possibility that women (either practitioners or patients) were the original intended audience, it does raise serious doubts.

⁹⁹ If the argument that "whomen . . . donne bettyr rede and undyrstande" English than Latin is to be accepted, then the presence in this text of an extended section

have been owned by a male surgeon within a century after its creation underscores how tenuous women's possession of texts might have been.¹⁰⁰

In light of all the apparent male involvement in this Middle English text, what is to be made of the rhetoric of the preface of this or, for that matter, any of the other vernacular translations ostensibly addressed to women? Should it be dismissed as false and meaningless on the assumption that the content of these works, because it came from texts either written or transmitted by men, could not possibly have reflected the gynecology and obstetrics practiced by women themselves?

Some scholars, in discussing both modern and premodern times, have suggested that men and women lived in such completely separate cognitive universes that gynecological theories formulated by men would in no way correspond to the "female medicine" practiced by women. Helen Lemay suggests that such an assumption is inappropriate. Granted, she relies for her argument on a comparison of the text Rowland edited (which as I have just argued can only tenuously be said to represent "women's medicine") and Guainerius's work (which, as I have also suggested, presents a very biased view of what "women's medicine" was). Nevertheless, Lemay's observation that medieval women as well as men may have fully accepted the cultural and scientific assumptions of their time is a point worth heeding.¹⁰¹

Benton, in contrast, believes that there is such a difference and that the "Trotula" texts, despite their (false) attribution to a woman, nevertheless reflect "male medicine," which he assumes was both less effective and more harmful than that practiced by women. Benton argues that male physicians took comfort in the thought that they were reading what a woman, speaking as a woman, had to say about gynecology, though he suggests that if medieval male physicians had really wanted to know "what women think," they could have looked at the medical writings of the twelfth-century German abbess, Hildegard of Bingen.¹⁰² While studies of these works show

in Latin (Rowland, 152–62) raises further doubts that it represents an original "women's text."

¹⁰⁰ See Rowland (46) for the later history of this manuscript. The other contents of the codex (which was created as a unit) are surgical, suggesting that it was intended to be used by a surgeon. There is no evidence to indicate whether the original owner was male or female, though the "de luxe" quality of the codex suggests at the very least that she/he was well-to-do.

¹⁰¹ Lemay, "Anthonius Guainerius" (n. 8 above), 325–26.

¹⁰² Benton (n. 22 above), 51–52.

that Hildegard was indeed a remarkably innovative thinker (particularly with regard to notions of female nature), her writings still evince a fundamental dependence on the dominant medical theories of her day.¹⁰³ Furthermore, if Delva is correct in arguing that women themselves were responsible for and used at least some of the vernacular translations of the "Trotula," this would suggest that they viewed the contents of the texts as an acceptable interpretation of their diseases.¹⁰⁴

The connection (or disjunction) between literature and reality is also relevant when interpreting rhetoric. Despite the hoary antiquity of the theme of women's modesty in gynecological and other literature,¹⁰⁵ this topos may still have been meaningful to medieval people, both male and female. Carl Rosenthal notes that, although male physicians considered themselves competent to treat the full range of gynecological disorders (even to the point of instructing the midwife!), he was able to find no instance of a man manually examining a woman's vagina for a gynecological disorder.¹⁰⁶ This deeply ingrained social taboo would have insured women a place in the medical care of other women, if only in the role of manual assistant to the male physician (as can be seen in Guainerius and other writers) and in the rarely challenged role of birth attendant.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ See Gertrude M. Engbring, "Saint Hildegard, Twelfth Century Physician," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 8, no. 6 (June 1940): 770–84; Bernhard W. Scholz, "Hildegard von Bingen on the Nature of Woman," *American Benedictine Review* 31, no. 4 (December 1980): 361–83; Michela Pereira, "Maternità e sessualità femminile in Ildegarda di Bingen: Proposte di lettura," *Quaderni storici*, no. 44 (August 1980), 564–79; and Joan Cadden, "It Takes All Kinds: Sexuality and Gender Differences in Hildegard of Bingen's 'Book of Compound Medicine,'" *Traditio* 40 (1984): 149–74. Cadden writes that "Hildegard of Bingen's views on the physical constitution of men and women were generally consistent with the scientific outlook of twelfth-century male medical and philosophical authors" (150). What is fascinating is how Hildegard used and manipulated those ideas in such a different fashion from that of her male contemporaries.

¹⁰⁴ It would be interesting to know whether in the vernacular translations of "Trotula" addressed to women emphasis was given to the fact that the author was (allegedly) female, leading women readers (as it had led men) to believe they were reading a woman's own theories and practices. Other than Trota's *Practica*, no other extant gynecological text is known to have been composed by a woman until the early modern period. The later texts show that women did accept many prevailing views of their physiology and diseases; see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975), 124–51, esp. 125. Perhaps class needs to be used as an analytical variable as well as gender.

¹⁰⁵ See Green, "Obstetrices" (n. 7 above).

¹⁰⁶ Rosenthal (n. 78 above), esp. 146–47.

¹⁰⁷ There is a very long tradition (which itself needs to be explored) of surgeons being called in in cases of difficult labor when the child often had to be sacrificed

The rhetoric of women's modesty is not used by Jacoba Felicie and the authors of the vernacular prefaces to support these merely ancillary roles, however. Rather, their employment of the rhetoric of modesty might be seen as a conscious attempt to actively turn the taboo to their own advantage and thereby resist the increasing circumscription of women's sphere of medical practice. Their desire may have been to *make* women's health women's business because it was women's interests that there be a sexual division of medical labor that would ensure them a field of practice where men could neither claim competence nor offer competition. The rhetoric of modesty could equally have served the purposes of women patients who may very well have preferred to be treated by attendants of their own sex. Indeed, in this sense, to speak of modesty in terms of "rhetoric" may be slightly misleading, for it is at least possible that women really felt the shame these statements attribute to them.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, since we do not yet have any testimony from women patients themselves telling us how they perceived this complex world of medical practice, for now we can only guess whether the sentiments we find in the vernacular gynecological literature addressed to women—having passed through who knows how many filters—do not in some way truly reflect women's desire "to help and conceal themselves in their maladies, without showing their diseases to men."

to save the life of the mother. It would be interesting to know whether, when there was a female surgeon at hand, she would be preferred to a male. If so, what would her relationship to the midwife be? Besides the traditional use of surgeons as the attendant of last resort in difficult labors, men apparently assisted births only of the upper classes. Labarge (n. 5 above) notes this but then quickly dismisses it as a relatively insignificant indicator of male obstetrical practice (179). Its rarity may not be the sole criterion with which to assess its importance, however. Because of concern over succession, the births of royalty and the nobility are great matters of state; for kings and nobles to consider university-trained male physicians competent to supervise these births indicates faith that they were indeed the best available attendants. For example, Michael McVaugh has demonstrated that King Jaime II of Aragón/Catalonia placed such high faith in university training that he went to great lengths to make sure that his wife, Blanca, was attended by a (male) physician at almost all of her ten births; see Michael McVaugh, "The Births of the Children of Jaime II," *Medievalia* 6 (1986): 7–16. Whether these physicians acted alone or in concert with an assisting midwife is not clear; there are no traces of any female midwives in the royal archives. Male involvement in gynecological surgery is also documented. The fifteenth-century anatomist, Berengario da Carpi, recalls a hysterectomy performed by his father, a barber surgeon; see R. K. French, "Berengario da Carpi and the Use of Commentary in Anatomical Teaching," in Wear, French, and Lonie, eds. (n. 69 above), 42–74, esp. 43.

¹⁰⁸ The social inculcation of shame would be well worth exploring, particularly from an anthropological perspective.

Other sources, other questions

Awareness of the deep tensions between men and women might help us decipher other aspects of women's health care and medical practice in medieval Europe. Here we are especially in need of interdisciplinary studies, such as Grethe Jacobsen's exemplary analysis of pregnancy and childbirth in medieval Scandinavia.¹⁰⁹ Jacobsen has taken virtually every sort of evidence imaginable—archaeological findings, laws, sermons, folk ballads, theological and scientific literature, even language itself—to reconstruct a picture of how women themselves experienced pregnancy and childbirth. Sensitive both to the different perspectives of what she terms “women's sources, men's sources, and common [or neutral] sources” and to the limitations of traditional periodization, Jacobsen describes among other things the *Kvindegilde* (Women's feast), a postpartum gathering of women which, “in its most raucous form, . . . ended with a tour of the village where women upset carts, split wagons, knocked over gates, destroyed haystacks, stripped the men they encountered and forced them to dance.”¹¹⁰ This may at first sight seem to show women's power and control of their reproductive capacities, yet as Natalie Zemon Davis has demonstrated for the sixteenth century, such ritualized reversals of the sexual order—as dramatic, even violent, as they may be—in fact can have very ambiguous meanings.¹¹¹

As with Davis's work on inversion rituals, methodological techniques developed in other areas of women's history have tremendous potential to inform the history of medicine. For example, Merry Wiesner's discussion of female healers in her study of women in early modern Germany has the inestimable virtue of placing these women in the context of workers, where questions of economic rivalry, guild regulations, and municipal and state control can properly be addressed.¹¹² Alison Klairmont Lingo's study of charlatans

¹⁰⁹ Grethe Jacobsen, “Pregnancy and Childbirth in the Medieval North: A Topology of Sources and a Preliminary Study,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 9, no. 2 (1984): 91–111.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 106–7.

¹¹¹ Davis (n. 104 above).

¹¹² Wiesner, *Working Women* (n. 38 above). Wiesner's admirable reconstruction of the training, practice, and social position of midwives in early modern Germany, one hopes, will serve as a model for similar regional studies; see also Natalie Zemon Davis, “Women in the Crafts in Sixteenth-century Lyon,” in Hanawalt (n. 38 above), 167–97. Although she does not discuss women healers specifically, the general conclusions of Martha Howell, *Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval*

in sixteenth-century France shows how potentially useful the concept of "Otherness" can be to assessing the development of professionalization in medicine.¹¹³ Such conceptual approaches might also be used to explore many other important questions, such as the development of a rhetoric about the ignorance of midwives and other women practitioners,¹¹⁴ or the role of women's literacy in determining their access to certain areas of medical knowledge, or the possible impact of the vernacular translations of gynecological literature.¹¹⁵ Literate sources are of only limited utility, however, in chronicling the history of a society that was predominately illiterate. One particularly fruitful form of evidence not yet fully exploited is artistic depictions of childbirth and other medical encounters, though

Cities (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), might usefully be set against the developments of women's increased restrictions in medicine, their access to medical guilds, and questions of the sexual division of medical labor. For example, in her study of the effects that the Black Death had on late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Florentine physicians, Katharine Park (n. 21 above) notes that she could find no evidence of women matriculating as physicians in the Guild of Doctors, Apothecaries, and Grocers before 1353 or after 1408; between those two dates, however, Park documents a notable opening-up of the profession to otherwise marginal practitioners. By contrast, women's access to guilds of surgeons and especially barbers in England seems always to have been quite free; cf. Gottfried (n. 17 above), 50–51. Although Gottfried's explanation for the relative freedom in the barbers' guilds is hardly satisfactory, he is nevertheless quite right to note that attention should be paid to whether these women gained access to the guild in their own right or only because, as widows, they were allowed to take the place of their dead husbands; see also Wyman, "The Surgeoness" (n. 53 above), 26–27.

¹¹³ Alison Klairmont Lingo, "Empirics and Charlatans in Early Modern France: The Genesis of the Classification of the 'Other' in Medical Practice," *Journal of Social History* 19 (Summer 1986): 583–603.

¹¹⁴ Ignorance had always been an argument used by university-trained physicians to distance themselves from other practitioners, but this theme seems to take on particular virulence when applied to women. This is noted briefly by Biller, "Childbirth in the Middle Ages" (n. 76 above), 44. While some would argue that for all their elaborate theories university physicians were in no better position to cure their patients than empirical healers, great caution is needed when addressing questions of medical efficacy, for it is both presumptuous and simply unhelpful to criticize medieval healers for not having thought and acted in ways that only make sense in light of modern medical discoveries.

¹¹⁵ For example, when Perretta Petonne was prosecuted in 1411 by the master surgeons of Paris for unlicensed practice, she was ordered to deposit her books on surgery with the provost for examination by the physicians; cf. Wyman, "The Surgeoness," 25; and Denifle, ed. (n. 42 above), 4:198–99. Thomas Benedek (n. 48 above) cites a late fifteenth-century German ordinance that also assumes women's literacy: "So that the midwives be better informed in all aspects [of their practice] *they should read their professional books diligently* and, when necessary, make use of the information of a physician" (554; emphasis added).

here, too, we need to beware mistaking topoi (in this case, iconographic ones) for historical realities.¹¹⁶

These desiderata could be continued ad infinitum. Clearly, the most pressing need is for extensive work based on the primary sources themselves. Benton's discovery of the genuine work of Trota (after more than four hundred years of empty speculation about her existence) could not have been accomplished without extensive manuscript research. Critical editions of medical texts are also essential if we are to avoid the danger of premature generalizations drawn from insufficient information. In all of this, we must remain sensitive to chronological, regional, religious, and class distinctions—in short to all the factors that create historical specificity and diversity.

Paying attention to such diversity allows us to realize how far we have been misled by simplistic assumptions, seeing uniformity where there may in fact have been much variety: in the roles midwives played, in the ways other women practiced medicine, in the medical needs women had beyond assistance at birth, and in the sources from which they obtained that medical care. Even though such findings do not radically alter the accepted view that the majority of births were probably attended by women up until the eighteenth, perhaps even the twentieth century, or that an all-female world of birthing ritual did exist,¹¹⁷ once we move beyond a reductive focus on the birth event, we see that there was also a world of interface between male practitioners and female patients—a world where women practitioners were gradually being restricted to a role as subordinate and controlled assistants in matters where, because of socially constructed notions of propriety, men could not practice alone. Women's health was women's *and* men's business, the latter being interested if for no other reason than their concern

¹¹⁶ See Loren MacKinney, "Childbirth in the Middle Ages, as Seen in Manuscript Illustrations," *Ciba Symposium* 8, nos. 5/6 (December 1960): 230–36; Volker Lehmann, *Die Geburt in der Kunst: Geburtshilfliche Motive in der darstellenden Kunst in Europa von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Brunswick: Braunschweiger Verlagsanstalt, 1978); Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Monique Closson, *L'enfant à l'ombre des cathédrales* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1985); Jones (n. 88 above), esp. 123–24; and Biller, "Childbirth in the Middle Ages." A study on the history of medieval illustrations of caesarian sections by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski is forthcoming from Cornell University Press. An index of medieval medical images is now being created at the Medical History Division, Department of Anatomy, University of California at Los Angeles.

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., Wilson, "Participant or Patient?" and "William Hunter" (nn. 10 and 58 above); and Nadia Maria Filippini, "Levatrici e ostetricanti à Venezia tra Sette e Ottocento," *Quaderni storici*, no. 58 (April 1985), 149–80, and the literature cited therein.

as husbands and fathers for the production of healthy (and legitimate) heirs or, as medical practitioners, for the potential profit to be made in treating the wives and daughters of their wealthier clients. As many other studies in the history of women have shown, the superficially simple dichotomies of sex and gender often mask very complex and tension-fraught realities of the relations between women and men. Making sense of such complexity is no easy task, but it is one that will inevitably enrich and deepen our understanding of the history of women's medical practice and health care in medieval Europe.

*Department of History
Duke University*

Medieval Academy of America

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Author(s): John W. Baldwin

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Five Discourses on Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Northern France around 1200

By John W. Baldwin

When we think of desire in the Middle Ages we immediately recall the religious exhortation to love God and despise the flesh. My present subject is not the desire for God but the less sublime theme of sexual desire, however the two may have been linked. Sexual desire was a central intellectual concern for medieval thinkers despite their reputed aversion to the subject. It was not, for example, the trifunctional schema of modern celebrity — *oratores, bellatores, laboratores* — that was the earliest and most pervasive of medieval social classifications, but the trisexual division among *coniugati*, *continentes*, and *virgines*. In other words, the human race was fundamentally grouped according to sexual activity.¹ As advocates of virginity, the monks were the first to pronounce on sexuality, and they formulated the terms of discourse lasting into the early Middle Ages. By 1200, however, I can find no new monastic treatise *De laude virginitatis* in northern France deemed worthy of transcribing because of the author's fame or the weight of its argument. Contemporary theologians were equally indifferent.²

By 1200, therefore, the unity of discourse initiated by the monks dissolved

In a slightly abbreviated form this paper was read at the annual meeting of the Medieval Academy at Princeton, New Jersey, on 11 April 1991. I wish to record my grateful acknowledgment to the community of the Johns Hopkins History Seminar, who have offered helpful suggestions, to David F. Hult of the University of Virginia, who continues to coach me on Old French texts, and to William C. Jordan of Princeton University, who opened access to a larger audience.

¹ Georges Duby, *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris, 1978), has stimulated interest in the trifunctional scheme. On the trisexual classification see Matthäus Bernards, *Speculum virginum: Geistigkeit und Seelenleben der Frau im Hochmittelalter*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 16 (Cologne, 1955), pp. 40–44. In recent work Giles Constable has emphasized the medieval importance of this classification. A treatise from Peter the Chanter's circle included both schemata; see *The Christian at Prayer: An Illustrated Prayer Manual Attributed to Peter the Chanter (d. 1197)*, ed. Richard C. Trexler, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 44 (Binghamton, N.Y., 1984), pp. 225–26, 253.

² For the domination of the monks, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), and John Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal*, Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Idées, series minor 17 (The Hague, 1975). Bernards's survey in *Speculum virginum* notes no treatise from this period. In a rare discussion of virginity Peter the Chanter emphasized its limitations. For example: "Item virginitas in corpore nil proderit si caritas aut humilitas a corde discessit. Melior est humilis coniugalitas quam superba virginitas . . ." (*Summa Abel*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 455, fol. 92va).

into a babel of tongues. Rather than surveying all of western Europe during the millennium we call the Middle Ages, I propose to direct our attention to a specific locality, northern France, and to a limited time, the two decades pivoted on the year 1200. It was a moment of coalescence in medieval society. The clerics perfected their schools, soon to become universities, the nobility, their courts, and the townsmen, their communes and corporations, each body organized to articulate the ideals of its members. It was also a moment when the specific issue of sexual desire captured public attention. We need only be reminded that in 1200 church doors throughout the French royal lands were closed to the faithful for nine months by a papal interdict. The issue was the inability of the king, Philip Augustus, to desire his legal spouse Ingeborg and his unlawful passion for his concubine Agnès de Méran.³ From that epoch I shall select the voices of five individuals who discoursed on desire. Although not impossible, it is unlikely that any one of these knew any of the others, but each was a neighbor and a contemporary. Each, moreover, addressed a different, although not entirely discrete, audience, and each was a spokesman for a long-established tradition.

The first is a theologian at Paris, Peter the Chanter, along with his close students, Robert of Courson and Thomas of Chobham. Both Peter and Robert had been assigned by the pope as judge-delegates to the case of the king's marriage. Peter treated our subject in his biblical lectures and had just begun to debate the issue in his classroom disputations, but these *questiones* had not yet been transcribed when he died in 1197. His student Robert's own *Summa* therefore contains the Chanter's last word, as it did in other matters. Thomas adapted his master's solutions to the casuistry of his *Summa confessorum*. The immediate audience of the theologians was the clergy, who were thereby instructed in the administration of confession and penance, but the ultimate audience was the entire body of the faithful, who owed obedience to the precepts of Christian morality. On the subject of sexuality the Chanter's circle accepted the momentous legacy of Augustine collected by the school of Laon in the early twelfth century and systematically reassembled in the authoritative *Sententiae* of Peter the Lombard.⁴

The second spokesman is recruited from an anonymous group of physicians who discussed medical matters in collections entitled the *Prose Salernitan Questions*. Despite the name, these treatises were composed in northern France and England at the turn of the century and were directed to the

³ John W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 82–85.

⁴ On the Chanter and his school, see John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Theories of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1970), 1:3–25, 34–36. On the preceding theological discussion of sexuality, see Michael Müller, *Die Lehre des Hl. Augustinus von der Paradiesesehe und ihre Auswirkung in der Sexualethik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts bis Thomas von Aquin*, Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie 1 (Regensburg, 1954), and Hans Zeimentz, *Ehe nach der Lehre der Frühscholastik*, Moraltheologische Studien, Historische Abteilung 1 (Düsseldorf, 1973). An exhaustive and authoritative treatment of the parallel developments in canon law is James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987).

clerical students of the schools who aspired to careers in learned medicine. It is important to note that they did not make use of the new Aristotle, whose writings on natural philosophy reemerged in the first decades of the thirteenth century, but rather the medical legacy of the ancient authority Galen.⁵

Jean Bodel of Arras is selected as the third spokesman, representing the fabliaux, that body of uninhibited stories in the vernacular. Most fabliaux cannot be dated with precision, but Jean Bodel's can be assigned to our period as both the earliest and most characteristic of a corpus of tales notorious for its enjoyment of sexuality. (To amplify Jean's slim production I have added other fabliaux whose characteristics resemble those of Jean's early examples and that cannot be assigned to a later period through internal or external evidence.) Although a townsman himself, Jean and succeeding jongleurs who recounted fabliaux faced broadly diversified audiences ranging from the lower aristocracy through the bourgeoisie. Articulating a literary genre that was reduced to writing only recently, Jean Bodel may also embody a folkloric tradition of great antiquity.⁶

The fourth spokesman is the controversial Andreas Capellanus, identified only as a chaplain of the king of France. An enigma to modern critics, most agree that his celebrated *De amore* was both encyclopedic and patently contradictory. Rather than attempting to distill authorial unity from its pages, I shall be content to accept it as a compendium of opinions representative of the audience for whom it was composed. These were clerics in the schools and at the courts of lay magnates who amused themselves by composing poetry and comedies about love in Latin. Declaring love to be an art that could be taught, Andreas perpetuated the ancient tradition of Ovid, whose celebrated *Ars amatoria* formulated authoritative precepts on *amor*.⁷

The final spokesman is Jean Renart from northeastern France, who represents the then-flourishing tradition of French romance composed exclusively for aristocratic circles that included patrons like Baudouin VI, count of Hainaut, and Milon de Nanteuil, *prévôt* of the chapter of Reims, as well as lesser knights. Since vernacular romance was already a half-century old by

⁵ Brian Lawn, *The Salernitan Questions: An Introduction to the History of Medieval and Renaissance Problem Literature* (Oxford, 1963), pp. xi–xiii, 50–72, and *The Prose Salernitan Questions*, ed. Brian Lawn, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi* 5 (London, 1979), pp. vii–xxiv. A recent introduction to sexuality in medieval medicine is Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexualité et savoir médical au moyen âge* (Paris, 1985), English trans. by Matthew Adamson, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988).

⁶ On the fabliaux in general, Per Nykrog, *Les fabliaux*, new ed., Publications Romanes et Françaises 123 (Geneva, 1973), remains authoritative. See also the recent survey of Charles Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux* (New Haven, 1986); for his opinion on the diversity of audience, see pp. 24–46. On Jean Bodel, see Charles Foulon, *L'oeuvre de Jehan Bodel*, Travaux de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Rennes, série 1, 2 (Paris, 1958), pp. 19–142.

⁷ Don A. Monson, "Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony," *Speculum* 63 (1988), 539–72, is a recent survey of Andreas scholarship. Two important and recent studies are Rüdiger Schnell, *Andreas Capellanus: Zur Rezeption des römischen und kanonischen Rechts in De Amore*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 46 (Munich, 1982), and Alfred Karnein, *De Amore in volkssprachlicher Literatur: Untersuchungen zur Andreas-Capellanus-Rezeption in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift 4 (Heidelberg, 1985).

1200, Jean drew inspiration from the Tristan legend and the great Chrétien de Troyes, both in turn echoing the *fin'amors* of the southern troubadours.⁸

Articulating the contemporary concerns of his audience, each spokesman nonetheless bore the ponderous legacy of his respective tradition. Those who wrote in Latin inherited a temporal dimension that reached back centuries into antiquity. In the imagery of the twelfth-century conceit, they were not dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants, but dwarfs bearing onerous giants on their shoulders.⁹

To choose five voices is to declare diversity — a diversity, however, in which the different voices interact as their varied audiences converge and overlap. The three learned discourses in Latin, to be sure, were formulated by and for the clerical schools, but the two vernacular discourses, even if written by clerics, were pronounced in language accessible to lay audiences. Brought together, the five breach the fundamental barrier between the spiritual and temporal so painstakingly erected by the Gregorian reformers a century previously. The five discourses, moreover, dissolve the monologue maintained by the monastic and clerical voices on sexual matters since the early Middle Ages. Although all historical epochs are equal in the sight of God, the moment of 1200 allows us to hear distinctive lay voices for the first time in western medieval history, not only of the elite aristocracy, but also of townspeople. This diversity of language, text, and discourse, however, remains unavoidably masculine and heterosexual. The direct voices of women and homophiles are too muffled to be heard at this time, but their presence is nonetheless acknowledged in the hegemonic discourses, however negatively for the latter.

These five discourses consist of cultural and linguistic constructs of what comes to count as sexual desire and gender. By sexual desire I mean the emotional state surrounding the sexual act that includes both appetite and pleasure. At times it is dignified by the name of love. By gender I understand the cultural engagement between the two biological sexes. To treat the discourses of sexuality and gender involves literary theory that cannot be adequately developed in an introductory essay of this length.¹⁰ Nor does the treatment of five discourses allow sufficient space to the complexities and nuances found in two sophisticated traditions of vernacular literary texts. Each of the five discourses, moreover, has been studied intensively by generations of scholars with significant advances appearing within the past few years. Not only do I depend heavily on such scholarship, but I fully recognize that this essay can propose little that will be considered novel to specialists in each of the fields. I nonetheless hope that by exploring the interplay among the five discourses, I shall not be merely guilty of shameless promiscuity of

⁸ Rita Lejeune, *L'oeuvre de Jean Renart*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 61 (Liège, 1935), remains the fundamental introduction.

⁹ Among numerous examples the classic expression of the conceit is in John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon libri IIII* 3.4, ed. Clemens C. J. Webb (Oxford, 1929), p. 900a.

¹⁰ A recent treatment of the problem, but not a solution that I follow, is Alexandre Leupin, *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*, trans. Kate M. Cooper (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. 1–16.

genre, but shall help to construct a conversation. Unfortunately it is not feasible to create an imaginary dialogue; what follows will merely outline the materials for a potential *colloquium* or *parlement* on sexual desire and gender. As we listen to the five, we should be prepared for silences as meaningful as exchanges.

It is fitting that our first spokesman be the theologian, since he bore the awesome legacy of Augustine originally introduced by the monks. This legacy defined sexual desire as *concupiscentia*.¹¹ Not inclined to the speculative issues of theology, Peter the Chanter and his students fully adopted the church father's doctrine on the origins and transmission of concupiscence, as mediated by Peter the Lombard. Augustine had rejected contemporary encratic views that attributed the origins of sexuality to sin and declared that the first humans in paradise were capable of intercourse, but without desire. Adam and Eve could rationally and willfully command their genitals just as one moves one's feet or hands. The Chanter used the image of finger touching finger.¹² It was not intercourse but sexual desire that was the result of the first parents' disobedience and falling into sin. Not only did concupiscence epitomize all that was corrupt in human nature, but it was also transmitted sexually, thus infecting the entire human race. *Concupiscentia* recapitulated the primal disobedience and became the primordial venereal disease. Just as the first parents refused to obey God, so their genitals began to disobey rational and volitional commands. At the pinnacle of sexual desire was orgasm, which represented this loss of self-control. "In the heat of lust," declared the Chanter echoing Augustine, "the whole man is so absorbed that he can neither do nor think of anything else. . . . The pleasure of the body totally captures and enslaves the mind."¹³ Overwhelming shame over sexuality pervaded human consciousness; the genitals were emblematically identified as *pubenda*; and clothes and secrecy screened the recalcitrant members.

As filtered through the Lombard, Augustine's position designated sexual desire as *concupiscentia* or *libido*, often combined as *libidinosa concupiscentia*. Its chief properties consisted of heat, as in the *ardor libidinis*, *fervor concupiscentie*, or *fomes peccati* (the kindling wood of sin), and of craving, as in *pruritus* (itching) or *titillatio*. It could convey *delectatio* (delight), usually qualified as *carnis delectatio*, but more often *voluptas*, usually tainted by connotations as-

¹¹ The principal texts are the early *De bono conjugali* and *De Genesi ad litteram*, which sought a middle ground between the Manicheans and Jovian, and the later *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, against the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum. The *De civitate Dei* was the final and most sustained analysis. See Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 387–427.

¹² See below, n. 79.

¹³ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.16, ed. Philip Levine, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1966), 4:352. Peter the Chanter to 1 Cor. 6.18: "Isto libidinis ardore, quo nullus maior est, sic homo totus absorbetur, ut nihil possit agere nec animus aliud cogitare, sed totus homo caro fit, ut secundum hoc animus et caro possint dici duo in carne una, quia voluptas corporis animum tenet servum et efficit captivum et quasi transire cogat in corpus" (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 176, fol. 180ra).

sociated with prostitutes.¹⁴ In accordance with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5.28), concupiscence enters through the eyes and resides in the heart.

By grounding sexual desire in the origin and transmission of sin Augustine had freighted human sexuality with the crushing opprobrium of basic evil. His chief relief to the laity who labored under this burden was the institution of marriage. God had ordained marriage not only for propagating the human race but also for remedying the ills of concupiscence. Little concerned with elaborating the origins and transmission of concupiscence, the Chanter concentrated his attention on marriage, now elevated by the Lombard to one of the seven sacraments. Like the ancient Augustine he was compelled to defend marriage against the attacks of the contemporary Cathars, who, as Neo-Manicheans, condemned marriage, procreation, and sexuality as ineradicably evil.¹⁵ More than Augustine and the Lombard, however, he responded to the needs of the laity by concentrating on marriage as the mechanism to separate and contain the pernicious effects of desire.

Continuing the Chanter's discussion, Robert of Courson composed a long and intricate *questio* in which he marshaled scores of authorities for and against the proposition now conventional to both canonists and theologians: whether *carnale commercium* (sexual intercourse) can be accomplished without sin in marriage.¹⁶ In the resulting discussion marriage was equated to other activities like prayer, almsgiving, even martyrdom that were essentially meritorious but susceptible to sinful contamination. Preaching, for example, could be performed for the glory of God or for personal vanity. The problem was to define, divide, and isolate the good elements from the sinful. Likewise going to church was laudable but could be performed with the intent both to worship God and to see one's mistress. Today's weather might be called overcast but actually produces both clouds and sunshine. As the Chanter argued animatedly in the last year of his life, a middle term and more precise analysis must be found between the extremes of merit and guilt.¹⁷ Much of

¹⁴ Peter the Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* 2.21.6, 4.31.6, 4.33.1, *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum* 4 (Grottaferrata, 1971), 1:437, 2:447, 459.

¹⁵ To *replete terram* (Gen. 1.28): "Patet quia dominus coniugium viri et mulieris constituerit in quo confutantur manichei dicentes non posse fieri concubitus sine mortali culpa" (Chanter, Paris, Bibliothèque Arsenal, MS 44, p. 7a; London, British Library, MS Royal 2.C.8, fol. 4vb). To *uxorem non dimittat* (1 Cor. 7.11): "Hoc heretici dicunt esse rem non bonam, nuptias detestans quas christus approprians eis interfuit et miraculo confirmavit" (Chanter, Mazarine MS 176, fol. 180va). To *multum est enim* (Ps. 24.11): "... in quo confutantur cathari qui dicunt non esse remissionem peccatorum post baptismum. Hii heretici dicuntur cathari quia mundos se dicunt, cum potius sint immundi. Hii secundas nuptias dampnant" (Chanter, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 12011, fol. 42ra).

¹⁶ Robert of Courson's *questio* is unedited: *Summa* 42.31, 32, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 14524, fols. 154ra–156ra. The following passages are merely excerpts from this long *questio*.

¹⁷ "... pari ratione totalis alia oratio vel elemosina vel martirium vel predicatio vel quodcumque aliud opus cuius alia pars non refertur ad deum non est meritorium. ... Plenius tamen et verius potest solvi sicut asseruit predictus cantor magister noster in extremo anno vite sue cum vivacius de hiis disputatum est quod scilicet in omnibus operibus talibus successivis distinguendum est inter particulas que referantur ad deum et illas que non referantur ad deum" (ibid., fols. 154ra, 155rb).

the sinfulness of marriage can therefore be reduced to the lightest (*venialissima*), smallest (*levissima*) particles of dust.

Adopting Augustinian-Lombardian categories, Courson assigned four final causes to marriage: for the sake of offspring, rendering the marital debt between spouses, avoiding fornication, and fulfilling one's desire. The first two can be performed without sin because the redeeming good of marriage excuses the residual concupiscence. To engage in sexual activity for the purpose of refraining from fornication is only a venial sin, but the fulfillment of desire is mortal.¹⁸ By these categories, therefore, the theologians isolated the element of sexual desire for closer analysis. At this point the Lombard had introduced the dictum of a Stoic philosopher identified as Sextus Pythagoricus who declared: "Any exceedingly ardent lover (*omnis ardentior amator*) of his own wife is worse than an adulterer." Following theological tradition, the Chanter's circle concluded that what defined the sin of concupiscence was clearly the quality of *immoderatio*, resulting in loss of control and enslavement to desire.¹⁹ Thomas of Chobham identified the element of immoderation with behavior appropriate to adulterers and prostitutes. Among his case studies he depicted husbands who "delighted in the beauty of their wives, in the sweetness of their flesh, and in adulterous and meretricious caresses. Day and night they use their wives as couches on which they pour out their lust in lascivious kisses and shameful embraces. Their women are not treated as wives but as objects of desire."²⁰

Whatever the sincere interest in lay folks' problems, these conclusions remained conventional. Robert of Courson, however, added a finishing touch that was original. The common man (*vulgus*), he objected, cannot be expected to heed the fourfold scholastic scheme. By inveterate and common custom the laity approach their wives not with predetermined goals but with the sole urge to copulate in wedlock. How can we counsel them when we know that they have sex not for the three licit causes but simply to satiate their appetites? Beyond Augustine's analysis lies a further category that is also without mortal sin. A simple layman is not obliged to understand the legal subtleties but may approach his wife *simpliciter* and desire her as his own wife. Laymen cannot be condemned for loving their wives too tenderly or too frequently, but only for immoderation, which is condemned in all licit activities. This is, therefore, the correct interpretation of Sextus's pronouncement. Just as one who eats

¹⁸ "... quod probatur auctoritate Augustini qui dicit quod quatuor de causis cognoscitur uxor, scilicet causa prolis, vel causa reddendi debiti, vel causa incontinentie refrenande, vel causa libidinis explende. Duos priores modi ut idem testatur Augustinus nullius sunt criminis sed tercius semper habet culpam tamen venialem, sed quartus semper culpam mortalem" (ibid, fol. 154ra).

¹⁹ Lombard, *Sententiae* 4.31.5, 2:447. Chanter to 1 Cor. 7.4: "Cohitus maritalis fit quandoque sine peccato cum exigitur debitum ab eo a quo exigitur vel cum causa procreande prolis ad cultum dei, forte tamen adheret hic macula venialis quamvis totalis cohitus non sit peccatum, quodam [modo] tamen peccatum veniale; quandoque [est veniale, quando] fit causa vitande fornicationis; quandoque est criminale quando fit explende voluptatis immoderate, unde vehemens amator proprie uxoris adulter est" (Mazarine, MS 176, fol. 180rb).

²⁰ Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, ed. F. Broomfield, *Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensia* 25 (Louvain, 1968), pp. 335–36.

too much is a glutton, so only the truly immoderate lover of his wife incurs mortal sin.²¹ By defining, isolating, and reducing the peccant elements in the marriage act, the Chanter's school endeavored earnestly to alleviate the oppressive burden imposed upon the laity by the Augustinian tradition of *concupiscentia*.

The physicians of the *Prose Salernitan Questions* defined coitus as the natural and voluntary union of a man and woman in which sperm was emitted and a fetus produced to the accompaniment of great delight ("operis multa comitante delectatione").²² While previous authorities in the Galenic tradition, such as Constantinus Africanus, had written at length on sexual intercourse, little attention was paid to desire. The element of *delectatio* (delight), however, became the dominant preoccupation of the *Prose Salernitan Questions*. The various authors, moreover, were not unaware of the theological position. A brief treatment, for example, of why intercourse conveyed more delight than other actions offered two responses. The theological explanation is that concupiscence is contracted from the first parents, but according to medicine it occurs from the concentration of nerves in the genitals and through the emission of sperm. An alternative theory according to the natural explanations of the physicians (*secundum physicam*) was even proposed for the theological doctrine of the Fall. God had originally created Adam a temperate being in a temperate paradise. When the serpent tempted Adam through Eve, Adam's thoughts and anxiety were immoderately stimulated and his body heated intemperately until he fell into sin.²³ In contrast to the theologians, therefore, the physicians attributed the positive quality of *delectatio* to sexual desire. Love (*amor*) was defined as "nothing other than delight with *gaudium*."²⁴

The *Salernitan Questions* returned repeatedly to the question of why so much delight (*tanta delectatio*) occurs in coitus. Departing from a general theory that attributed coitus to the interaction of three basic elements — spirit, heat, and humors — the doctors proposed various physiological explanations. As the humors circulate through the body impelled by spirit, they generate heat and itching. When the sperm is emitted, however, either im-

²¹ "Primi tres modi sunt sine peccato mortali, et preter illos tres potest esse quartus sine mortali peccato, scilicet cum simplex aliquis, qui non tenetur scire apices iuris, accedit ad uxorem, scilicet simpliciter, non tenendo magis ad hunc quam ad illum finem, sed accedit ad uxorem tanquam ad suam volens uti sua. Non enim iudicandum est laicos ideo damnandos esse quia nimis tenere diligunt uxores suas vel quia frequenter accedunt ad eas, sed secundum Augustinum tunc peccant mortaliter cum eis utuntur ad explendam libidem sed quocumque modo sive contra naturam sive quocumque alio modo immoderate, scilicet ut immoderatus sit excessum qui damnatur ei tam in licitis, unde Fulgentius: Vehemens amator uxoris adulter est. Sicut enim in nimio essu currit aliquis castrimargiam, ita in nimio coitu contrahat vehemens et immoderatus amator uxoris ex nimio coitu mortalem maculam" (Courson, *Summa* 42.31, BN MS lat. 14524, fols. 155vb–156ra). Sextus has been corrupted to Fulgentius.

²² "Coitus est viri ac mulieris commixtio ex utriusque naturali ac voluntaria coniunctionis actione cum spermatis emissionem, fetus procreatio, operis multa comitante delectatione" (*Prose Salernitan Questions*, ed. Lawn, p. 9).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 220.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

pure traces or superfluities are expelled or the sperm is whitened. Whatever the particular process, the final ejaculation is accompanied by increased heat and tickling as the humors pass through concentrated nerves in the genitals, all of which stimulates intense pleasure. Equally important as the physiology that accounted for the symptoms of heat and itching were the psychological dimensions of sexual desire. Vision and the mental faculties further enhance sexual pleasure. As the eyes behold the external world, the images of beauty are transmitted by spirit through the optic nerve to the soul. The resulting pleasure reinforces the physiological processes. Humans are further endowed with greater sexual desire than animals because of the peculiarly human faculties of imagination, reason, and memory located in the three ventricles of the brain.²⁵ Unlike animals, for example, human females desire coitus even when pregnant because their psychological faculties retain the pleasurable effects of sexual desire. Whereas animals are naturally incited to intercourse in the spring, the convergence of sight, imagination, reason, and memory in the soul prolongs human desire and heightens the physiological pleasure, rendering *delectatio* the most *immoderata* of all sensations.²⁶

As a whole the *Salernitan Questions* was more concerned with sexuality's physiological and psychological foundations than with diagnosing and curing sexual dysfunctions. In a passing reference to maniacal lovers who were troubled by too much imagination and thought, however, a compilation of Master Alain alluded to the classical pathology of *amor heroicus* diagnosed and treated since antiquity. According to the standard authority, Constantinus Africanus, brought up to date by a commentary of Gérard de Bourges around 1200, it could be divided between physiological and psychological components. On the one hand, the symptoms consisted of sunken eyes, sleepless nights, fits of weeping, and abnormal pulse; on the other, by excessive thoughts, worry, and depression. Physiologically it stemmed from humoral imbalance of too much black bile or from coldness and dryness in the brain's middle ventricle, inducing melancholia. Psychologically it was provoked by excessive contemplation of beauty or the malfunction of the estimative faculty in the middle ventricle, which distorted images before transmitting them to the imaginative and desiring faculties. Designated a *morbus* (sickness) of the brain by Constantinus and a *passio* (suffering) by Gérard, the *amor heroicus* was, in short, the pathological exacerbation of the components of sexual desire itself, by which members of aristocratic society were especially afflicted.²⁷

Our third discourse, the vernacular fabliaux, depicts a world exuberant with sexual energy. Nearly half of Jean Bodel's extant tales recite with relish and detail the couplings of men and women both within and without marital

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 10–11, 21, 160, 161, 169.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 22, 186–87.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 276. The most recent and helpful discussion of *amor heroicus* is Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and Its Commentaries* (Philadelphia, 1990), which includes new editions of the texts of Constantinus Africanus (pp. 188–93) and Gérard de Bourges (pp. 199–205).

bonds. So active was this sexuality that the fableors sought to distance themselves from aristocratic decorum by adopting a characteristically frank lexicon. Their predilection for the words *foutre*, *vit*, *coilles*, *con*, and *cul* suggests that they were more concerned with the act than with delicacy of expression.²⁸ (Augustine might claim that one's hesitation to translate these words into English lends confirmation to his theory on shame.)

Whenever the fableors evoked desire, they preferred the broad and neutral terms of *talent* and *volenté*, which like the Latin *libido* and *desiderium* ranged from desire to simple wish or will and implied natural appetites akin to hunger and thirst. The trickster Boivin, for example, avers that he has lost all *talent* for women since his wife's death seven years ago, but the prostitute Mabel responds that a man is foolish to endure *talent* for a woman too long: it is like overdoing hunger. In the dark confusion of the peasant's hut Jean Bodel's young cleric does his *volenté* with Gombert's daughter. When a valet, David, finally seduces a prudish girl, he does his *boen* and *talent*, which does not slacken in four tries.²⁹ On most occasions the experience is one of uncomplicated happiness, evoked by the words *joie*, *deliz* (delight), *dedruit* (pleasure), and *solaz* (solace), a vocabulary shared with romance and the physicians' *delectatio*. Evocative of desire, the ubiquitous fire metaphor is not raging or threatening. To return to the bed in the dark hut, when Gombert's wife, for example, mistakes the second cleric for her husband, she remarks that this evening he is pleasantly *eschaufez*, contrary to habit. David lies with the prudish girl as a peasant curls up before the hearth. Desire has become a warming, comforting sensation.³⁰

Not only were the authors of the fabliaux blissfully indifferent to the theological condemnation of concupiscence, but their works are further distinguished from medical treatises and romances by the absence of cogitation and suffering. The closest that a fabliau comes to lovesickness is in Jean Bodel's story of the wife from Douai. When her merchant husband returns home after a prolonged absence on business, he is unresponsive to his spouse's accumulated desires and falls asleep. Bored and frustrated, the wife also slumbers but begins to dream that all she has desired is vividly displayed for sale in a market specializing in male equipment. Jean Bodel entitled this orgiastic fantasy *Li sohaiz desvez* (*The Wild Desires*), but whatever the implied malady, it is quickly remedied when the husband is awakened and recalled to his duties.³¹ Scarcely an illness, sexual desire does not long await joyous satisfaction in the fabliaux.

Of all our interlocutors Andreas Capellanus was the best read and most knowledgeable. From his colleagues in the schools he was conversant with

²⁸ On this sexual vocabulary, see Nykrog, *Fabliaux*, pp. 209–14, and Muscatine, *Old French Fabliaux*, pp. 105–17.

²⁹ *De Boivin de Provins*, ed. Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard, *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux* (Assen, 1984), 2:102, ll. 244–49.; Jean Bodel, *De Gombert et des deus clers*, ed. Pierre Nardin, *Jean Bodel, Fabliaux* (Paris, 1965), p. 88, l. 63. *La damoisele qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre* (II), ed. Noomen and Van den Boogaard, *Nouveau recueil*, 4:89, ll. 205–7.

³⁰ *De Gombert*, pp. 90–91, ll. 121–22. *Damoisele qui ne pooit*, p. 87, ll. 120–23.

³¹ Jean Bodel, *Li Sohaiz desvez*, ed. Nardin, pp. 99–107.

the standard theological arguments justifying marriage. Curiously, however, he marshaled the traditional goals of progeny and returning the marital debt to deny the proposition that husbands could be lovers of their wives, reviving the hoary dictum of Sextus Pythagoricus, now endowed with apostolic authority.³² Even his third book, the violent palinode against his previous definitions of love and the most religiously oriented of his entire treatise, so thoroughly excoriates sexuality that it all but ignores the contemporary theologians' attempts to absolve sexual desire from mortal guilt. Andreas is also conversant with contemporary medical theory, quoting authorities common to the *Prose Salernitan Questions*. Beyond his Latin colleagues from the schools, he was equally versed in vernacular romance. Iseut is included among the maidens of renown, and his treatise reports traditions on desire close to those of romance.³³ But the tradition to which he gave supreme allegiance was that of Ovid, the ancient and self-proclaimed preceptor of sexual love.

At best, however, Ovid's personal opinion of sexual desire was ambivalent. The supreme goal of all his amorous energy was, to be sure, the joy of physical possession, the *Veneris gaudia*, to which his *Ars amatoria* was merely the tried and true guidebook. In the *Amores*, however, in which his immediate objective, Corrina, was married and of difficult access, the poet was at times rewarded with contented languor, often with frustration, but rarely with joy.³⁴ Pierced by Cupid's darts, love became a wounded beast or — to use the customary metaphor — a raging fire. "We [lovers] burn with fire. . . . Wakeful nights bring loss of weight. . . . Care and pain are the results of our great love. . . ."³⁵ The implicit explanation for this mingling of joy and pain was the fundamentally adulterous nature of Ovid's desire. Since Corrina was married, the poet was condemned to the torments of jealousy.

Andreas blended this ancient Latin authority with the contemporary vernacular tradition of romance. The Ovidian *gaudia* were commuted to the *suavia solatia delectationis* (the sweet solaces of delight), thus combining the physicians' *delectationes* with the romance poets' *solaz*.³⁶ More important, in his first two books Ovid's adulterous context was melded to parallel situations in the romances. The countess of Champagne's celebrated judgment that true love cannot survive between a husband and wife because it excludes jealousy elevated this devouring passion to the distinguishing hallmark of sexual desire.³⁷ To quote Andreas's memorable definition of love: "*Amor est*

³² Andreas Capellanus, *De amore libri tres* 2.6, ed. E. Trojel (Copenhagen, 1892), p. 147; *On Love*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (London, 1982), p. 150.

³³ Ibid. 2.6, ed. Trojel, p. 181; ed. Walsh, p. 178. The definition of sleep, for example, *ibid.* 3 (ed. Trojel, p. 336; ed. Walsh, p. 305), can be found in the *Salernitan Questions*, p. 186. See Mary F. Wack, "Imagination, Medicine and Rhetoric in Andreas Capellanus' 'De Amore,'" *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earle Kaske*, ed. Arthur Groos (New York, 1986), pp. 104–5.

³⁴ Ovid, *Amores* 1.5, 3.7, and 3.7, ll. 25–26, ed. E. J. Kenney (Oxford, 1961).

³⁵ Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1, ll. 729, 734–36; 3, l. 543, ed. E. J. Kenney (Oxford, 1961). Cf. *Amores* 1.2, ll. 1–9.

³⁶ Andreas, *De amore* 1.6, ed. Trojel, p. 173; ed. Walsh, p. 172.

³⁷ Ibid. 1.6, ed. Trojel, p. 154; ed. Walsh, pp. 154–56.

passio. . . . Love is a certain innate suffering that proceeds from sight of and immoderate thinking about the appearance of someone of the other sex."³⁸ Unlike the medical treatises, however, Andreas neglected the physiological to stress the psychological components of vision and cogitation. Since love originates in sight, a blind man is disqualified as a lover because he cannot furnish his mind with the visual objects necessary for thought. Vision serves only as a gateway to the mind, where love as *passio* is generated.³⁹ Availing himself of the broad semantic range of *passio*, Andreas construed it here as a mental process. "When a man sees a woman ready for love . . . , he immediately begins to lust for her. . . . Thinking about her, he begins to burn with greater love and attain greater thought."⁴⁰ Because of the importance of cogitation, Andreas was induced to experiment in cerebral exercises, such as "love of the upper parts" and "pure love," that proceeded from kissing, to embracing, even to nude caresses, but omitted the final solace — techniques that invariably failed to persuade his female interlocutors.⁴¹ Most important in Andreas's definition was the factor of *immoderatio*. Not only did it recall the *vehemens amator* so vigorously denounced by the theologians, but it also resembled the physicians' pathological *amor heroicus*. Echoing Gérard de Bourges's diagnosis, love was *passio*, that is, suffering, caused by an excessive thinking and imagination and sharing some, if not all, of the symptoms. Like his master Ovid, therefore, Andreas Capellanus was fundamentally ambivalent about sexual desire. As the origin and cause of all good, it could bring supreme joy; but regarded as suffering, its inherent immoderation hastened illness, insanity, senility, and death.

In sharp contrast to the fabliaux the writers of French romance consistently refused to name the sexual act explicitly, but like the fabliaux they nonetheless chose words evocative of pleasure. *Joie*, *delit*, *deduit*, and *solas* were the vernacular equivalents of Ovid's *gaudium*, the physicians' *delectatio*, and Andreas's *solatium*, all of which rooted sexual desire in the linguistic soil of happiness. Like the Ovidian tradition, however, the romance lyricism of sexual bliss was also accompanied by harsher notes of *dolur*, *paine*, and *anguise*. Before listening to the voice of our principal romance poet Jean Renart, we should first turn to two predecessors, the Tristan legend and Chrétien's adaptation in *Cligès*, which prepared his discourse.

The archetypal tale of Tristan and Iseut squarely framed sexual love within the Ovidian context of adultery. If Bérout's magic potion permits the lovers some measure of happiness,⁴² in Thomas of Britain's version they are condemned to pain, agony, and suffering. Tristan becomes the eponym of sadness, and sexual desire acquires the emblematic symptoms of seasickness induced by the motion of waves in Gottfried von Strassburg's celebrated pun:

³⁸ Ibid. 1.1, ed. Trojel, p. 3; ed. Walsh, p. 32.

³⁹ Ibid. 1.5, ed. Trojel, pp. 12–13; ed. Walsh, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 1.1, ed. Trojel, p. 5; ed. Walsh, p. 34.

⁴¹ Ibid. 1.6, ed. Trojel, pp. 182, 212; ed. Walsh, pp. 180, 204.

⁴² Bérout, *Le roman de Tristan*, ed. Ernest Muret and L. M. Defourques, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1947), ll. 2139–49.

l'ameir (love), *l'ameir* (bitter), and *la meir* (sea).⁴³ The torments of jealousy and unfulfilled desire absorb the thoughts proceeding from their hearts, now separated from the bodies through adulterous love. Death is the only possible resolution to such suffering. According to romance convention the lovers embrace — body to body and mouth to mouth — but without romance *joie* and *delit*.⁴⁴

In *Cligès* Chrétien de Troyes so radically revises the Tristan legend that it has been taken for a neo-Tristan if not an anti-Tristan. The former themes are applied to two generations of couples, the young, unmarried, and therefore innocent Alexandre and Soredamor, and Cligès and Fenice, who assume Tristan's and Iseut's marital roles but are technically absolved of adultery by the legendary device of magic potions. Both pairs of lovers nonetheless suffer the anguish of desire. On shipboard Alexandre and Soredamor replicate Tristan's and Iseut's seasickness to the threefold rhythm of the waves. The lovers change color, tremble, and pass sleepless nights. Love scalds them like boiling baths, burns them like fire.⁴⁵ *Dolor, paine, mal, engoisse, and soffert* constitute the lexicon of their suffering. Passing through the eye, love's arrow wounds the hearts, thus allowing Chrétien opportunity to devote analysis to the eyes and the heart in the inception of love.⁴⁶ The next generation also suffers, but Fenice refuses to submit to the apparently adulterous situation and separate heart from body as did Iseut. Drugged with magic potion, her nominal husband's desire and delight are limited to his dreams. The theological remedy of marriage becomes the ultimate resolution for both couples. The *amie* is elevated to *dame*, thus uniting hearts to bodies and transforming Ovidian and Tristan *dolor* into *joie*.⁴⁷

Jean Renart's entire literary production labored under Tristan's explicit spell. Invoking the example of the great lover, a knight succeeds in seducing a married woman by a clever ruse in the exquisite *Lai de l'ombre*. He too must pass through *ahan, grant soufret, maus, and destroiz*, but he achieves happiness in the end.⁴⁸ Jean Renart's two major romances, however, underscore this felicitous conclusion by incorporating Chrétien's adaptations. Like *Cligès*, the first romance, *L'escoufle*, recounts two generations of lovers. The second pair, Guillaume and Aelis, are raised together from infancy in the same nursery. Ineluctably drawn together in love, the two are separated by their parents but rejoin to elope. On their journey they are once again separated by the

⁴³ Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, ed. Reinhold Bechstein and Peter Ganz, Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters 4/2 (Wiesbaden, 1978), ll. 11989–12019. Gottfried undoubtedly borrowed the French pun from Thomas.

⁴⁴ Thomas, *Les fragments du roman de Tristan*, ed. Bartina H. Wind, Textes Littéraires Français (Geneva, 1960), p. 162, ll. 809–19.

⁴⁵ Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, ed. Alexandre Micha, Classiques Français du Moyen Age (Paris, 1957), ll. 541–44, 464–67, 590–92.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 681–761. See the analysis of Ruth H. Cline, "Heart and Eyes," *Romance Philology* 25 (1972), 263–67.

⁴⁷ Chrétien, *Cligès*, ll. 6633–38.

⁴⁸ Jean Renart, *Le lai de l'ombre*, ed. Félix Lecoy, Classiques Français du Moyen Age (Paris, 1979), on Tristan: ll. 104–5, 124–27, 456–57; on suffering: ll. 126, 203, 401, 491; on happiness: ll. 944–48, 956–57.

mischievous of a buzzard (hence the title) but finally reunite and are happily married. Like Tristan and Iseut, *L'escoufle* is a medieval *Bildungsroman* that explores the youthful awakening of desire in the antique tradition of Daphnis and Chloe. Jean Renart, however, protests that his precocious couple does not resemble Tristan and Iseut (evidently from Bérout's version), whose death was the result of the potion. His lovers will not be driven by external compulsion (*force*).⁴⁹

At age two, while disguised as brother and sister and still too young to know desire, they have already discovered the pleasures denoted by the endearing locutions *ami* and *amie*.⁵⁰ Their callow attempts to explore sexuality — kissing, embracing, touching without shame — produce *joie et liece*, but *Amors* does not spare them. As their eyes feed on each other, they succumb to the classic traits of *angoisse*, accompanied by sighs and sobs, which looks cannot conceal.⁵¹ Their coming together in the garden and during the elopement enhances happiness; their separations aggravate suffering. At the final reunion at Saint-Giles their glances interlace heart to heart through the windows of the eyes. Not even Tristan and Iseut, Jean remarks, knew such joy. That night — reminiscent of the Tristan episode — their beds are placed close to each other. Whereas Tristan had made his passionate leap to Iseut's bed, Jean will say no more but coyly observes that he who shivers before the fire willingly draws closer. With a little flip of the hip she could slip in next to him.⁵² Sexual desire is no longer the raging blaze of the Ovidian and Tristan tradition but the comforting sensation of the physicians and the fabliaux. Never at any point in the narrative can Jean Renart's audience ascertain that the young pair have consummated their love — like Chrétien's *nice*, Perceval — but the listeners never doubt that the long trial of *dolor* and *anuis* has been transformed to *joie* and *delit* on the wedding night.

Jean Renart's third story of love was the *Roman de la rose*, better known as *Guillaume de Dole* to distinguish it from the more famous *Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung. This time the love is between the young Conrad, powerful emperor of the Germans, and the beautiful Lienor, sister of the lowly knight Guillaume de Dole. To distinguish this romance from all others Jean inserted into his narrative some forty lyric pieces accompanied by music from a repertory of *grands chants courtois*, dance songs, and *chansons de toile*, many anonymous but some from well-known poets. The intended effect is similar to operetta or musical comedy, where song and music unite with dramatic narrative to tell a love story. Most important, these songs are Jean's vehicle for expressing sexual desire.⁵³

⁴⁹ Jean Renart, *L'escoufle*, ed. Franklin Sweetser, Textes Littéraires Français (Geneva, 1974), ll. 6352–59.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 1981–91.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1992–2003.

⁵² *Ibid.*, ll. 7816–23, 7856–84.

⁵³ On the use of the lyrics in the narrative of the *Roman de la rose* see Emmanuelle Baumgartner, "Les citations lyriques dans le *Roman de la rose* de Jean Renart," *Romance Philology* 35 (1981), 260–66, and Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), pp. 108–16.

The romance opens with Conrad unwilling to assume his imperial duty to marry and produce heirs; rather, he indulges in amorous escapades. On a hunt one summer morning his rivals are sent off into the forest while he and two companions return to the ladies in the tents, who welcome them between the sheets to *deduit* and *solaz*. To the tune of joyous dance songs these dalliances are innocent of suffering. Like fellow lovers in the fabliaux the emperor is not disturbed by thinking — Jean emphasized — not even about the safety of his soul.⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter, however, Conrad falls in love with the *belle* Lienor, not with her sight as in romance tradition (because he never sees her until the end of the story), but with her verbal portrait as pronounced by his jongleur. The emperor articulates his joy and sensual desire by singing a refrain from the Châtelain de Coucy:

Li noviaus tens et mais [et violete]
 et roissignox me semont de chanter;

 Or m'en doint Dex en tel honor monter,
 cele ou j'ai mis mon cuer et mon penser
 q'entre mes bras la tenisse nuete
 ainz q'alasse outremer.

(The new season, the month of May, violets, and the nightingale all summon me to sing. . . . Would that God grant me the great honor to hold her naked in my arms, she in whom I have placed my heart and thoughts, before I depart overseas.)⁵⁵

Tension is introduced into the narrative by antagonism between a wicked seneschal, who attempts to obstruct the emperor's love, boasting that he has seduced Lienor and citing as proof the rose-shaped birthmark on her thigh (hence the name of the romance), and the heroine Lienor, who successfully vindicates her honor. After initial happy anticipation, the plot proceeds through dolorous testing to a joyous triumph. Jean's vehicle for conveying obstructed desire was the *grand chant courtois*. In Renaut de Beaujeu's verses Conrad complains:

Loial amor qui en fin cuer s'est mise
 n'en doit ja mes partir ne remouvoir
 que la dolor qui destraint et justise
 samble douçor quant l'en la puet avoir.

 por ce m'en lo quant plus me fet doloir.

(Loyal love which is placed in a fine heart should never go or depart because the pain which grips and dominates seems sweet to those who can have it. . . . I am pleased with [love] when it makes me suffer.)⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Jean Renart, *Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, ed. Félix Lecoy, Classiques Français du Moyen Age (Paris, 1979), ll. 186–93, 224–28.

⁵⁵ Ibid., ll. 923–30. Compare *Chansons attribuées au Chastlain de Couci*, ed. Alain Lerond (Paris, 1964), p. 76.

⁵⁶ Jean Renart, *Roman de la rose*, ll. 1456–59, 1469.

Beyond the northern *trouvères* Jean reached back to the most poignant voice of obsessive desire in the *fin'amors* of the renowned Poitevan troubadour, Bernart de Ventadour:

Quant voi l'aloete moder
de goi ses ales contre el rai,
.....
Miravile est que n'is del sens
ne coir dont desier non fon.
.....
et por tant el ne m'oste rent
for desier et cor volon.

(When I see the lark in the sun moving its wings of joy . . . , it is a marvel that I do not leave my senses or that my heart does not melt with desire. . . . She and everyone leave nothing else except desire and a languishing heart.)⁵⁷

Conrad's descent to the depths of lovesickness is expressed by an anonymous poet:

Amours a non ciz maus qui me tormente;
mes n'est pas teuls com les autres genz l'ont,
.....
Et ge di: "Las! mi mal, quant fineront?"

(Love is the name of the disease that torments me, but it is not like the love that other men suffer. . . . I exclaim: "When will my pain cease?")⁵⁸

At Liënor's final triumph the agony of the *grand chant courtois* shifts key to the jubilation of the dance song. The troubadour's unrequited love is transformed into the simple request (*demandez*) expressed reciprocally:

Que demandez vos
quant vos m'avez?
que demandez vos?
dont ne m'avez vos?

(What do you ask, when you have me? What do you ask? Am I not yours?)⁵⁹

This, Jean Renart declared, was their *Te Deum*. As preparations are made for the marriage, Conrad sings of simple and joyous *volenté* in the dance refrain:

J'ai amors a ma volenté
teles com ge voel.

(I have all the love I want, such as I desire.)⁶⁰

At the great wedding in Mainz on the feast of the Ascension the emperor elevates his *amie* to the status of wife and queen. As in *Cligès* and *L'escoufle*,

⁵⁷ Ibid., ll. 5212–27. Compare Bernard de Ventadour, *Chansons d'amour*, ed. Moshé Lazar, Bibliothèque Française et Romane, série B: Editions Critiques de Textes 4 (Paris, 1966), p. 180.

⁵⁸ Jean Renart, *Roman de la rose*, ll. 4587–91.

⁵⁹ Ibid., ll. 5106–9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., ll. 5444–45.

Jean Renart returns to the theological institution of marriage for the resolution of desire. In a fine bed and in the arms of his *amie* Conrad enjoys that night the exquisite pleasure (*dedit*) of consummation. To suggest the pinnacle of Conrad's happiness, Jean Renart recalls the joys of a score of fictional lovers, among them Marie de France's fabulous Lanval and, most important, the legendary Tristan, not the tormented adulterer but the youthful lover who inspired *L'escoufle*. "When Tristan loved Iseut," Jean concluded, "and could take pleasure with her in embraces, kisses, and the *sorplus* that accompanied it, . . . then you can be sure that one could not easily compare their happiness to this one."⁶¹ Following Chrétien, Jean once again rejects the adulterous and dolorous paradigm of Ovid, Andreas, and Thomas. Although sexual desire entails *angoiss*, this *doloir* turns to supreme *joie* and *delit* of married bliss.

I trust that these five discourses, crudely epitomized here, have offered substance sufficient for a conversation on desire, one that a Socrates, were he present, would transform into an elegant symposium. We note immediately that despite the theologians' assertion of authority it is not a theological monologue. Whatever the attempts of Peter the Chanter and his colleagues to adapt the Augustinian tradition to the laity's needs, the four other voices — even the clerical voices — pay scant heed to their doleful sermon. Desire defined as *concupiscentia* does not enter into the other discourses. Only in the hyperbole of his third book does Andreas Capellanus caricature it, thereby ignoring contemporary efforts to reduce its excesses. The physicians acknowledge theological doctrine but simply proffer alternative explanations. The closest others come to recognizing orgasmic loss of control, the heart of the theological theory, is the pathology of lovesickness. On concupiscence itself the vernacular voices are mute.

Not only do the other discourses ignore the theologians, they openly resist the privileging of marriage and propose the Ovidian paradigm of adultery. The numerous parish priests exiting back doors of the houses of bourgeois matrons signal its popularity in the fabliaux. Within its adulterous context the Tristan legend construes desire as destructive, leading inevitably to death, the nearest approach to the theological equation of desire with evil. The royal chaplain Andreas perversely stresses the quality of immoderation suggestive of the pathology of lovesickness that directly contravenes the moderation urged by the theologians. When Chrétien de Troyes and Jean Renart offer marriage as a solution, they apply it to emperors, kings, and the higher aristocracy who concur with the theological goal of progeny. We may suspect, however, that their motivation is due less to the pious intention to avoid sin than to the imperative of lineage that guaranteed power and wealth.

Throughout the twelfth century the papacy and the French episcopacy had struggled to assert their jurisdiction over all aspects involving marriage

⁶¹ Ibid., ll. 5507–15.

and, by extension, over all expression of human sexuality.⁶² During the twenty years in which Innocent III and Philip Augustus engaged in litigation over the latter's marriage to Ingeborg, the pope's ultimate goal was less to defend the unfortunate Danish princess than to compel the French king to submit his marriage to the judgment of the church. That Philip appeared to submit to this jurisdiction on crucial occasions did not thereby imply that he conformed his sexual life to the church's teaching. Not long after the pope agreed to legitimize his irregular children with Agnès de Méran, he produced another bastard with a "certain lady from Arras."⁶³ Nor could royal acquiescence to ecclesiastical authority be considered decisive in encouraging French subjects to confine their sexuality within marriage. The contemporary and later fabliaux suggest that widely implemented attitudes accorded more with the king's deeds than with his verbal profession.

With the single exception of the *Roman de la rose* the five discourses agreed that desire is prompted by the eyes and resides in the brain (according to the physicians and Andreas) or the heart (according to the theologians and romanciers). Its symptoms consist of craving and heat for which physiology furnishes explanations. A comforting warmth in the fabliaux and Jean Renart, it is acutely painful in Andreas and the Tristan legend. At best, desire alternates between grief and delight in the romances of Chrétien and Jean Renart but is equated with unambivalent delight by the physicians and the fableors. The theologians can conceive of *delectatio* only in terms of *voluptas*, incurably infected by evil. By contrast, however, the four other voices attribute to sexual desire the rewards of supreme joy.

Only on one conclusion were the five voices unequivocal in agreement: that homosexual and bestial expressions of desire are totally reprehensible. It may be true that the well-established antipathy to homoeroticism in theology and the early-medieval penitentials was apparently ignored in the works of Peter the Lombard and Gratian, the authoritative theological and canonistic collections of the mid-twelfth century. By threatening those who practiced "incontinence against nature" with separation from society, however, the influential Third Lateran Council of 1179 nonetheless kept the homophobic tradition alive.⁶⁴ Peter the Chanter himself played an important role in reviving theological discussion. As a leading biblical scholar, he collected in his popular manual, the *Verbum abbreviatum*, a homophobic dossier consisting of virtually all relevant scriptural passages, thus accentuating the al-

⁶² The theoretical arguments have been treated by Pierre Daudet, *L'établissement de la compétence de l'église en matière de divorce et consanguinité (France, Xème–XIIème siècles)* (Paris, 1941), and the practical struggle with the Capetian monarchy by Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 25–81.

⁶³ Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, pp. 84–87, 206, 210, 518.

⁶⁴ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 226–28. This anomaly accords with Boswell's general view that unprecedented homosexual expression was permitted in the early twelfth century. According to canon 11 of Lateran III (*Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J. D. Mansi [Florence and Venice, 1759–93], 22:224–25) homosexual clerics were to be degraded and incarcerated in monasteries and homosexual laymen were to be excommunicated and thereby separated from the faithful.

leged enormities of the practices.⁶⁵ His lead was followed by the other discourses. If Ovid had averred that he was little interested in boys, Andreas Capellanus further aligned himself squarely with the theological tradition by postulating that love exists only between persons of different sexes, blushing to embrace what nature forbids.⁶⁶ The medical treatises, although not limiting their discussion to reproduction, assumed without exception that all coitus takes place between parties of different sexes.

Reflecting the Tristan legend and Chrétien de Troyes, Jean Renart was likewise silent on homosexual genital activity. The romance tradition, however, had harbored scattered but strong aversion to homoerotic practices. In Marie de France's *Lanval*, for example, a story which Jean himself cited, Queen Guenièvre accuses the hero of having no *talent* for women, but delighting (*deduiez*) only in beautiful boys, when he refused to reciprocate the queen's advances.⁶⁷ Despite abundant and explicit sexual activity, the fabliaux, like the romances, were also reticent about homophilia. The one exception, however, *Le prestre et le chevalier* by Milon d'Amiens, is sufficient to reveal a virulent antipathy that exceeded even the romances. Thoroughly inhospitable, ungenerous, avaricious, and lecherous, the priest of the story is the antithesis of every Christian and chivalric virtue. So great is his greed that nothing escapes sale — including his niece and concubine — but when called upon to submit to the passive sexual act, he utterly refuses. Even if he were given the cities of Péronne or Roie, Nevers or La Charité, he swears by God that he will never take the place of a woman under a man.⁶⁸ On this aversion to homophilia, and on this point alone, have the four other discourses clearly hearkened to the theologians' voice. Their unanimity prepared the way for further theological and canonistic discussion in the thirteenth century, now sharpened by new conceptions of nature introduced by the rediscovered natural works of Aristotle — all of which combined to encourage enactment of legislation designed to eradicate homoerotic practices from western Europe.

Although our five discourses are exclusively drawn from male heterosexual voices, their articulations of desire nonetheless contain implicit constructions of gender. Although we might have expected conclusions that buttressed the undisguised male dominance of traditional patriarchy, in fact we find remarkable agreement on equality and reciprocity between the sexes over

⁶⁵ Peter the Chanter, *Verbum abbreviatum*, PL 205:333–35. See also Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, pp. 398–403. The Chanter's influence has been noted by Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, pp. 277–78.

⁶⁶ Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2, ll. 682–84. Andreas Capellanus, *De amore* 1.2, ed. Trojel, pp. 6–7; ed. Walsh, p. 34.

⁶⁷ *Lanval*, ll. 278–82, in Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. Alfred Ewert (Oxford, 1976). In addition to instances found in Marie, see similar charges levied in *Eneas*, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1929), ll. 8565–95. See also Raphael Levy, "L'allusion à la sodomie dans *Eneas*," *Philological Quarterly* 27 (1948), 372–76. Etienne de Fougères, *Le livre de manières*, ed. R. Anthony Lodge, *Textes Littéraires Français* (Geneva, 1979), ll. 1097–1128, extended the attack to lesbian practices.

⁶⁸ *Recueil général des fabliaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud (Paris, 1877), 2:84, 88.

sexual desire. Among the romances, for example, the lover's suffering or joy cannot be distinguished as to gender. Chrétien de Troyes affirmed that *Amors* imparts equal gifts to Alexandre and Soredamor because of mutual love and desire.⁶⁹ After separation, both of Jean Renart's young partners fantasize on their desire for each other.⁷⁰ Since Daphnis and Chloe, explorations of young love have suggested equal and mutual discovery. Although the fabliaux retain a general reputation for misogyny, it would be difficult to distinguish the intensity of desire in the vigorous couplings between the innumerable men and women.

The reciprocity of the romances and fabliaux found theoretical reinforcement from the theologians and the physicians. Resisting the temptation to place greater blame on Eve, Peter the Lombard, following Augustine, had assigned equal responsibility to the first parents for the Fall.⁷¹ The theological tradition was thoroughly grounded in the Pauline principle of equality in sexual relations between husband and wife: "For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife" (1 Cor. 7.4). Peter the Chanter concluded that although a husband does not thereby lose his lordship over his wife, a man and wife are nonetheless equal in sexual obligations.⁷²

Equally influential was the physiological rationale for this underlying equality provided by the *Salernitan Questions*. Although the sexes differ in temperament (males are hot and dry, females cold and moist), individual complexions within the sexes varied. Prostitutes, those women about whom the physicians were best informed, exhibit a great range. Some temperaments are so cold that they have little desire or delight; others are hotter than certain men.⁷³ Surveying their own temperaments, the physicians noted that Master Hugh de Mapenor, who later became bishop of Hereford, possessed a small appetite but great energies, whereas Master Philip Rufus of Cornwall had the reverse. Master Johannes Burgensis was more satisfactorily endowed with appetites to match his capabilities.⁷⁴

Despite differences in individual complexions, the physicians of the *Salernitan Questions* grounded equality and reciprocity between the sexes in anatomy and physiology. They accepted the Galenic proposition that the male body is normative to the female, with the consequent corollary of the complementarity of the two sexual bodies. Females possess equivalents to the male sexual organs with the difference that women's are turned inward and men's outward. The uterus, for example, corresponds to the scrotum and the vagina to the penis, and both sexes possess testicles. In other words, a woman is an inverted man. Since the male is normative, this theory implied

⁶⁹ Chrétien, *Cligès*, ll. 524–27.

⁷⁰ Jean Renart, *L'escoufle*, ll. 3028–37, 3283–87.

⁷¹ Lombard, *Sententiae* 2.22.6, 2.31.7; 1:444, 509.

⁷² Chanter to 1 Cor. 7.3–4: "In hoc enim pares sunt vir et mulier nec in hoc tollitur viro dominium in muliere . . ." (Mazarine MS 176, fol. 180r). The principle of equality was reinforced by the canonists. See James A. Brundage, "Sexual Equality in Medieval Canon Law," *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, ed. Joel T. Rosenthal (Athens, Ga., 1990), pp. 66–79.

⁷³ *Salernitan Questions*, pp. 7–8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

male superiority. Galen's twelfth-century followers, however, seem to have withstood that conclusion, preferring the mutuality and reciprocity latent in the common possession of testicles.⁷⁵ Their inclination towards reciprocity was corroborated in a debate issuing from two physiological theories of reproduction, the one-seed doctrine of Aristotle and the two-seed doctrine of Galen. According to the former there is only one seed, produced actively by the man and received passively in the woman's womb, where it is nourished with menstrual fluids. To bring about reproduction, therefore, sexual desire is necessary only to the man.⁷⁶ Augustine had also apparently adopted the one-seed theory, attributing to the sexual act the exclusively phallic images of foot, hand, and finger or the farmer sowing seed by hand.⁷⁷ Like soil, women passively receive the male seed and produce fruit. The twelfth-century physicians, however, rejected this Aristotelian doctrine for the Galenic theory of the two seeds. Galen had proposed that both women and men possessed testicles productive of sperm, thus attributing both anatomical and physiological equivalence to the two sexes.⁷⁸ Reproduction therefore required sexual desire from both women and men. Among the theologians Peter the Chanter accepted the two-seed theory and transformed Augustine's single-finger metaphor to one-finger-touching-another, suggestive of mutuality.⁷⁹

This predilection for equality and reciprocity, however, was tempered by

⁷⁵ Galen, *On the Useful Parts of the Body*, trans. Margaret Tallmadge May, 2 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1968), 2:628–29. For Galen the compelling argument for masculine superiority was the observation that males are warmer than females. On the homologous relation between the male and female bodies, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. 25–34. Except for the proposition that both men and women have testicles, the Salernitan anatomies took little notice of the Galenic homologues in their descriptions of genital anatomy. See, e.g., *Anatomica Ricardi Salernitani*, ed. Ignaz Schwarz, *Die medizinischen Handschriften der k. Universitätsbibliothek in Würzburg* (Würzburg, 1907), p. 90, and the *Anatomia magistri Nicholai*, ed. Franz Redeker (Leipzig, 1917), p. 56. Only after the appearance of Aristotle's natural treatises (David de Dinant, *Quaternuli*, pp. 31–32; see below, n. 83) and Avicenna's *Liber canonis* 3.21.1.1 (Venice, 1501), fol. 285v, in the early thirteenth century were the analogies emphasized in the Salernitan *Anatomia vivorum*, ed. Robert Töply, *Anatomia Ricardi Anglici* (Vienna, 1902), pp. 21–22.

⁷⁶ Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford, 1988), pp. 28–32. Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexualité et savoir médical*, p. 85; English trans., p. 61.

⁷⁷ On the prevalence of the sewing-of-seed metaphor in Augustine and his interpretation of the story of Abimelech in Gen. 20, which implied the one-seed theory: Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.14, 15, in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1974), 23:206–14, and *De civitate Dei* 14.23, 24, 26, ed. Levine, pp. 382, 386, 396. See the conclusions of Elizabeth A. Clark, "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichaean Past," *Ascetic Piety and Woman's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston, N.Y., and Queenston, Ont., 1986), pp. 310–12.

⁷⁸ *Salernitan Questions*, pp. 6, 93.

⁷⁹ Chanter to Ps. 50.7: ". . . unde notandum quod duplex est conceptio. Prima fit quando semina duorum, scilicet, viri et femine, in matrice concipiuntur, et est conceptio carnis, et in ista fit causa originalis" (BN MS lat. 12011, fol. 94vb). To Gen. 1.28: ". . . prolis posteritate quod quia sine coniunctione eorum fieri non potuit. Patet quia deus coniugium viri et mulieris constituerit in quo confutantur maniches dicentes non posse fieri concubitus sine mortali culpa. Si non peccas, homo sicut digitus digitum tangit sine voluptate" (Arsenal MS 44, p. 7a, and British Library, Royal 2.C.8, fol. 4vb). The same metaphor was repeated by the Chanter's students: "Magister noster Cantor dicit . . . quod per primum hominem qui si cognoscere vellet uxorem suam in primo statu non plus pruriret caro quam si digitus digitum tangeret" (Courson, *Summa* 42.31, BN MS lat. 14524, fol. 154vb, and similarly Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, p. 343).

nuance and ambivalence. Although the desire of Jean Renart's young lovers is mutual, it is expressed differently. Guillaume remembers how he actively kissed Aelis's eyes and mouth, how his hand dared pass beneath her gown, whereas Aelis's fantasies passively receive Guillaume's caressing hands. Among Andreas Capellanus's pairs of interlocutors it is the men who take the initiative and attempt to persuade the women, but the women astutely subvert and parry the men's arguments.

The physicians likewise assigned gender differences to sexual desire. If Galenic theory found physiological equivalence between the sexes, the physicians of the *Salernitan Questions* further argued for greater sexual desire in the female. Although women are moist and humid in complexion, they are more fervent in desire than men. The heat of female desire resembles green wood, which catches fire less readily but burns stronger and longer. Because the uterus is cold and the male semen hot, the uterus rejoices to receive it. Whereas the man knows only one pleasure in emitting seed, the woman experiences a *duplex delectatio* in both the emission of her own seed and the reception of the male's.⁸⁰ This physiological potential for greater desire in the female could be assigned either a positive or a negative value. It could account for the initiative assumed by Liënor, Jean Renart's heroine. Although the young lovers in *L'escoufle* both act with equal initiative, in the *Roman de la rose* it is Liënor who plays the dominant role. Conrad, like the lovers of the *grands chants courtois*, remains inactive throughout the narrative. This passivity is, in part, due to the isolation imposed on him by his imperial dignity. Not having seen, but having only heard of his *amie*, he approaches her indirectly through her brother. When confronted with her alleged dishonor, however, he is powerless to act. The true actor in the drama is Liënor herself, who vindicates her reputation and reveals her identity to the emperor. Jean Renart adopts a *chanson de toile*, *La belle Aiglentine*, to articulate Liënor's role. When Aiglentine discovers that she is pregnant by Count Henri, she rides off to the count, arouses him from bed, and demands that he marry her, which, in fact, he does. As with Liënor, the story ends in joyous nuptials that convey marital status and political dignity. Each stanza ends with the emblematic refrain:

Or orrez ja
comment la bele Aiglentine exploita.

(Now hear what the *belle Aiglentine* did!)⁸¹

The greater female potential for sexual desire, however, could also be interpreted adversely. Andreas included it in a misogynistic litany from his third book. A woman is basically *luxuriosa* because, no matter how potent the man, her *libido* cannot be satisfied.⁸² Thus interpreted, the physiological attribute could serve to fuel the literature of traditional misogyny, in which female sexuality became a voracious monster whose insatiable appetites consumed helpless males.

⁸⁰ *Salernitan Questions*, p. 4.

⁸¹ Jean Renart, *Roman de la rose*, ll. 2235–94.

⁸² Andreas Capellanus, *De amore* 3, ed. Trojel, pp. 353–54; ed. Walsh, p. 318.

The discourses that converged on gender relations at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries interacted in complex and contradictory ways. A single theory cut in different directions. The medical theories of the homologous bodies and the two seeds could combine with the theological doctrine of the reciprocal marital debt and the romance ideal of mutual young love to reinforce gender equality. Yet homologous anatomy, if the male body was normative, could also encourage male dominance. The physicians' attribution of twofold desire to women could both support female independence and nourish misogynistic fears of female sexual voracity. In the balance, however, the vectors converging towards gender equality and reciprocity probably outweighed those supporting male superiority. If this was the resolution around 1200, it did not last long into the thirteenth century.

In 1210 a group of notorious heretics were condemned at a provincial council at Paris under the presidency of the archbishop of Sens, himself a former theologian at Paris. The proceedings were confirmed five years later by Robert of Courson, now papal legate to France. Among the proscribed treatises were Aristotle's philosophical and natural works and the *Quaternuli* of David de Dinant. In addition to pantheistic heresies this last work contained large excerpts from Aristotle's natural treatises, including the theory of the single seed. In direct opposition to the Galenic doctrine of the two seeds, it forcefully asserted that only the male emits sperm; the female merely produces menstrual blood for nourishing the embryo. Accompanying this physiology was the philosophy that the male is the efficient cause conferring form; the female the material, contributing only matter; the former active, the latter passive. Whatever the former impact of Galen's two-seed doctrine, Aristotle's one-seed theory undoubtedly reopened a radical division between the sexes and reasserted ultimate male superiority. David de Dinant faithfully transmitted Aristotle's logical conclusion that the female was essentially an imperfect male, just as is a boy ("femina est mas imperfectus, quemadmodum et puer").⁸³ Although condemned by the theologians at Paris in 1210 and 1215, these theories were eventually accepted by the Scholastic theologians of the thirteenth century, most notably Thomas Aquinas, and became the received doctrine thereafter. Seen in hindsight, therefore, the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was a privileged moment in the history of gender equality. It was a time when Galenic theories, accompanied by concomitant notions, still enjoyed widespread credence before the onslaught of Aristotelianism that provided male dominance with a persuasive scientific rationale.

⁸³ David de Dinant, *Quaternulorum fragmenta*, ed. Marianus Kurdzialek, *Studia Mediesistyczne* 3 (Warsaw, 1963), pp. 23, 24, 31. For the context, see Gabriel Théry, *Autour du décret de 1210*, 1: *David de Dinant*, Bibliothèque Thomiste 6 (Le Saulchoir, 1925), pp. 7–12.



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Author(s): R. Howard Bloch

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Medieval Misogyny

Woman as Riot

IF THE ABOVE TITLE SEEMS redundant, it is because the topic of misogyny, like the mace or chastity belt, participates in a vestigial horror practically synonymous with the term *medieval*, and because one of the assumptions governing our perception of the Middle Ages is the viral presence of antifeminism. The ritual denunciation of women constitutes something on the order of a cultural constant, reaching back to the Old Testament as well as to Ancient Greece and extending through the fifteenth century. Found in Roman tradition, it dominates ecclesiastical writing, letters, sermons, theological tracts, discussions and compilations of canon law; scientific works, as part and parcel of biological, gynecological, and medical knowledge; and philosophy.¹ The discourse of misogyny runs like a rich vein throughout the breadth of medieval literature. Like allegory itself, to which (for reasons we do not have time to explore) it is peculiarly attracted, antifeminism is both a genre and a topos, or, as Paul Zumthor might suggest, a “register”—a discourse visible across a broad spectrum of poetic types.² Excellent examples are to be found in Latin satires like John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*, Walter Map’s *De nugis curialium* (especially the Letter of Valerius to Rufinum), Andreas Capellanus’s *Art of Courtly Love* (book 3), as well as in the .XV. *Joies de mariage* and what is perhaps the most virulent antimatrimonial satire in the vernacular tongue, Jehan Le Fèvre’s translation of the *Lamentations de Mathéolus*. Misogyny is virtually synonymous with the works grouped under the rubric of “les genres du réalisme bourgeois”: the comic tale or fabliaux (including Middle English and Italian versions); the animal fable (*Roman de Renart*); the comic theater or farce; but also certain mixed or unclassifiable forms like the chantefable *Aucassin et Nicolette* or Adam de la Halle’s *Jeu de la feuillée*; and, of course, Jean de Meun’s portion of the *Roman de la rose*.

So persistent is the discourse of misogyny—from the earliest church fathers to Chaucer—that the uniformity of its terms furnishes an important link between the Middle Ages and the present and renders the topic compelling because such terms still govern (consciously or not) the ways in which the question of woman is conceived by women as well as by men. Misogyny is not so much a historical subject as one whose very lack of history is so bound in its effects that any attempt merely to trace the history of woman-hating is hopelessly doomed, despite all moral imperative, to naturalize that which it would denounce (more on this later). This is not to imply that there have been no changes in the ways misogyny has

through time been received, understood, assimilated by particular cultures, implemented, or pressed ideologically in the service of repressive social practice. Rather, it suggests that the very tenacity of the topoi of antifeminism is significant in and of itself and, in fact, provides one of the most powerful ways of thinking the phenomenon, since the extreme complexity of defining just what misogyny is remains indissociable from its seeming ubiquity or from the essentializing definitions of woman apparent in the writings of just about anyone who has touched the subject from Tertullian to Nietzsche.

The endurance of many of the earliest formulations of the question of woman means that the question of where to begin to understand the Western current of woman-hating must first respond to the question of why it is possible to begin just about anywhere—which I propose to do with a passage, selected almost at random, from among the many misogynistic tirades of Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*:

Ha! se Theofrastes creüsse,
 Ja fame espousee n'eüsse.
 Il ne tient pas homme por sage
 Qui fame prent par mariage,
 Soit lede ou bele ou povre ou riche,
 Car il dit, et por voir affiche,
 En son noble livre *Aureole*,
 Qui est bonz a lire en escole,
 Qu'il y a vie trop grevainne,
 Plene de torment et de painne.

[Ha! If I had only believed Theophraste, I would never have taken a wife. He holds no man to be wise who takes a woman in marriage, whether ugly or beautiful, poor or rich. For he says, and you can take it for truth, in his noble book *Aureole*, which is good to read in school, that there is there a life too full of torment and strife.]³

Though the Theofrastes referred to (identified alternately with the author of the *Characters* and with a pupil of Aristotle) and his “livre *Aureole*” are otherwise unknown, both are cited by almost every misogynist writer of the Middle Ages. Together they constitute an absent *locus classicus* of misogyny “read,” as Jean maintains, “in schools.” Further, the passage at hand is less a true example of misogyny, a denunciation of the essential evil nature of woman, than a subgeneric topos known as the *molestiae nuptiarum* or antimarriage literature: “Il ne tient pas homme por sage / Qui fame prent par mariage.”

Of what, it may be asked, do the pains of marriage consist?:

Qu'il y a vie trop grevainne,
 Plene de torment et de painne,
 Et de contenz et de riotes
 Par les orguelz des femes sotes,

Et de dangiers et de reprouches
 Que font et dient par lor bouches,
 Et de requestes et de plaintes
 Que truevent par ochoisons maintes.
 Si ra grant pene en eus garder
 Par lor fos voloirs retarder.

[That there is there a life too full of torment and strife and arguments and riotousness because of the pride of foolish women—and dangers and reproaches which they do and say with their mouths, and requests and complaints which they invent on many occasions. It takes a great effort to keep them and to hold back their foolish wills; lines 8569–78.]

Women are contentious, prideful, demanding, complaining, and foolish; they are uncontrollable, unstable, and insatiable: “Si ra grant pene en eus garder / Por lor fos voloirs retarder.” To push a little further, one cannot help but notice the extent to which the pains of marriage involve verbal transgression, that the reproach against women is a form of reproach against language itself—“that which is said by the mouth”—to be more precise, *contenz* (contention, garrulousness, bickering, and quarrels), *reprouches* (criticism, reproach), *requestes* (demands), *orguelz* (pride). Woman is depicted as a constant source of anxiety, of dissatisfaction, but of an anxiety expressed—or, as the text suggests, “composed”—within language itself: “Que truevent par ochoisons maintes.” I say this because the reproach against women, addressed to “anyone who marries,” is posited as universal and a priori, but also because there is no position of innocence possible. Woman is conceived as a perpetually overdetermined signifier with respect to which man is always at risk. To wit: if she is poor, one must nourish, clothe, and shoe her: “Et qui vuet povre fame prendre, / A norrir la convient entendre / Et a vestir et a chaucier” (lines 8579–81), but if she is rich, she is uncontrollable:

Et se tant se cuide essaucier
 Qu’il la prengne riche forment,
 A soffrir la ra grant torment,
 Tant la trueve orgueilleuse et fiere
 Outrecuidie et bobanciere.

[And if one thinks he can escape by taking a rich one, he will suffer great torment again—so arrogant and prideful will he find her, so outrageous and full of presumption; lines 8582–86.]

If a woman is beautiful, all desire her (lines 8587–96), and she will in the end be unfaithful; yet if she is ugly, she will need all the more to please and, again, will eventually betray: “Maintes neïs par eus se baillent, / Quant li requerreor defail-lent” (Many will give themselves willingly when suitors lack; lines 8658–59). If she is reasonable, she is subject to seduction: “Penelope neïz prendroit / Qui bien au prendre entenderoit; / Si n’ot il meillor fame en Grece” (One could take Penel-

ope herself, and there was no better woman in Greece; lines 8605–7); yet if she is irrational, she becomes the victim, as in the example of Lucretia, of madness and suicide (lines 8607–10). Nor is such a view restricted to the Romance vernacular. John of Salisbury is just as precise: “A beautiful woman is quick to inspire love; an ugly one’s passions are easily stirred. What many love is hard to protect; what no one desires to have is a humility to possess.”⁴ Chaucer echoes virtually the same motif in the Wife of Bath’s reproach of all such reproaches: “Thou seist to me it is a greet meschief / To wedde a povre womman, for costage; / And if that she be rich, of heigh parage / Thanne seistow that it is a tormentrie / To soffre hire pride and hire malencolie.”⁵ Woman by definition finds herself in a position of constant determination, movement. She is, as Jean contends, “contenz et riotes,” and, as Jehan Le Fèvre adds, of “tençon rioteuse.”⁶

Woman as riot is a topos in medieval literature and has a special sense in Old French. The word *riote* itself, meaning “chaos” or “upset,” also refers to a kind of poetic discourse belonging to the rich tradition of nonsense poetry—the *fatras*, *fatrasie*, *dervie*, *sotie*, and *farce* as well as to the more specific type known as the *riote del monde*, of which one example is the prose *Dit de l’herberie* and another the fabliau entitled “La Rencontre du roi d’Angleterre et du jongleur d’Ely.” After a series of nonsensical parries capped by the poet’s reminder that “one often hears a fool speak sanely, and the wise man is the one who speaks wisely,”⁷ the crafty jongleur—in anticipation of the fool of Renaissance drama—seeks to teach the king a lesson about language in general:

Et tot vus mostroi par ensample
 Qu’est si large et si aunple
 Et si pleyn de resoun,
 Que um ne dira si bien noun.
 Si vus estes simple et sage houm,
 Vus estes tenuz un feloun. . . .
 Et si vus les femmes amez,
 Et ou eux sovent parlez
 Et lowés ou honorez . . .
 Donques dirra ascun pautener:
 “Veiez cesti mavois holer,
 Come il siet son mestier
 De son affere bien mostrer.”
 Si vus ne les volez regarder
 Ne volenters ou eux parler,
 Si averount mensounges trovés
 Que vus estes descoillé!

[And I will show you by examples that are so general and compelling and so full of reason that one cannot fail to agree. If you are a simple and wise man, you are taken for a rogue . . . If you like women and speak often with them, frequent them, and praise and honor them . . .

someone will say: "Look at that evil pimp who knows his work and shows it." If you do not look at them or willingly talk with them, they will find the lie to prove that you are castrated! *Recueil*, 2:249–65.]

The example with which we began, Jean de Meun's vision of women as overdetermined, is complicated by the fabliau's positing of the problem of overdetermination in terms of vision itself. There is, the anonymous poet asserts, no possibility of an objective regard upon the opposite sex and, therefore, no innocent place of speech. The mere fact of speaking to women makes one a pimp; a refusal to speak or even to look is the sign of a castrato.

This changes somewhat our paradigm, since the inadequacy of women to Being, expressed as an ever-present overdetermination, becomes, in the passage cited, indissociable from the inadequacy of words, or, as the anonymous author of *La Ruihote del monde* suggests, of speech:

S'il se taist, il ne set parler;
S'il parole, vés quel anpallier,
Il ne cese onques de plaidier . . .
S'il cante bien c'est un jongleres;
S'il dist biaux dis, c'est uns trouveres.

[If a man is quiet, he is accused of not knowing how to speak; if he speaks, of being a loudmouth who never shuts up. . . . If he sings well, he is taken for a jongleur; and if he uses nice phrases, for a trouvère.]⁸

The riotousness of woman is linked to that of speech and indeed seems to be a condition of poetry itself. And if the reproach against woman is that she is a bundle of verbal abuses (*contenz, ríotes, reprouches, requestes, plaintes*), such annoyances make her at least the fellow traveler of the trouvère. Because of the inadequacies of language that she embodies, she is in some fundamental sense always already a deceiver, trickster, jongleur. Here the king's attempt to buy the poet's horse and the image of the horse sale are central:

Vendras tu ton roncyn à moy?
—Sire, plus volenters que ne le dorroy.
—Pur combien le vendras tu?
—Pur taunt com il serra vendu.
—Et pur combien le vendras?
—Pur taunt come tu me dorras.
—Et pur combien le averoi?
—Pur taunt comme je recevroy.

[Will you sell me your horse? —Yes, more willingly than I would give it. —For how much will you sell it? —For as much as it will be sold. —And for how much will you sell it? —For as much as you will give me. —And for how much will I have it? —For as much as I shall receive; *Recueil*, 2.244–51.]

Woman, as deceiver, is like a horse that one cannot inspect before the sale; and, like language, she is, as Jean de Meun implies, pure cover who hides “that she might not displease before being wed.”⁹ Chaucer concurs: “Thou seist that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,/They been assayed at diverse stoundes But folk of wyves maken noon assay,/Til they be wedded” (“Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” lines 285–91). Nor, as Innocent III contends, is it possible to separate the motif of horse trading from that of overdetermination: “There are three things,” Innocent writes, “which keep a man from staying home: smoke, a leaky roof, and a shrewish wife. . . . If she be beautiful, men readily go after her; if she be ugly, she as readily after them. It is hard to keep what many want, and annoying to have what no one cares about. . . . When you buy a horse, an ox, a dog, clothes and a bed, even a cup and a pitcher, you get the chance to look them over. But no one displays a bride, lest she displease before the marriage.”¹⁰

Reading Misogyny

If the above quotations seem repetitious to the point of monotony, it is because misogyny as a discourse is always to some extent avowedly derivative; it is a citational mode whose rhetorical thrust is to displace its own source away from anything that might be construed as personal or confessional and toward the sacred authorities whose own source, as often as not, is the absent (and possibly nonexistent) Theophrastes with which we began. The misogynist speaks of the other in terms that bespeak otherness, and this through the voice of the other. This defining tautology emphasizes the elusiveness of misogyny as well as the pertinence of the question of reading. To be more precise, I think that it can be shown that where antifeminism is concerned the question of reception is crucial, and work like the *Roman de la rose*, for example, may be less important for what it might actually contain than for what surrounds it. Indeed, the history of the reading of Jean’s text not only offers a key to our understanding of misogyny at the end of the Middle Ages; it constitutes the most meaningful sense in which woman-hating can be historicized. The history of misogyny, as a citational mode, resides primarily in the radical difference between that which is said—through time—about such texts, or in the problem of interpretation. Hence the negotiation of the parameters for discussion of the misogynistic work is a map of a certain kind of sexually charged misreading that serves at any given cultural moment to define the permissible limits of gender relations.

It is, first of all, around the question of woman that questions of language and of literature are debated passionately between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The so-called “Querelle de la rose” was not only France’s first literary debate but one that turned specifically around the enmeshed issues of woman and interpretation which strike to the core of the issue at hand. Christine de

Pisan, for instance, poses the delicate questions of authorial intention, voice, and the relation of poetic representation to social base in a sarcastic response to Jehan Johannez a propos of the *Rose*:

Et la laidure qui la est recorderee des femmes, dient plusieurs en lui excusant que c'est le Jaloux qui parle, et voirement fait ains comme Dieu parla par la bouche Jeremie. Mais sans faille, quelxque addicions mençongeuses qu'il ait adjoustees, ne peuvent—Dieu mercy!—en rien amenrir ne rendre empirees les conditions des femmes.

[And many say in excusing the ugly things that are said there of women that it is the Jealous Husband who talks, as if truly God were speaking through the mouth of Jeremiah. But without a doubt, whatever untruthful things he has added to the pile cannot—thank God!—either improve or render worse the condition of women.]¹¹

Or, as in the letter of Jean de Montreuil to Gontier Col, the questions of women and of reading are so thoroughly intertwined as to displace the phenomenon of misogyny away from any definable, stable, textual reality toward the reading subject:

Nonetheless our censors curse, hate, scorn, and attack him in a shameful way, having read him, studied, and understood him badly: this is what is intolerable! What arrogance! What rashness! What audacity! These people who admit themselves to only having read superficially, by bits and with no concern for context: here is how they rush in, like drunks arguing at the dinner table, to blame, reproach, and condemn arbitrarily and at their whim such an important work, conceived and edited in so many nights and days, at the price of so much effort and with such constant application, as if such an important text weighed no more in the balance than the song of a jongleur, the work of one day.¹²

Jean de Montreuil's concern is not only merely a rhetorical strategy; it poses what remains a key issue with respect to the study of misogyny: that is, how to recognize it, how to read it—which is not fundamentally different from the problem of how to read medieval literature or, for that matter, any literary text.

Is misogyny a matter of the portrayal of women or a more specific discourse? If a question of how women are portrayed, does one such portrayal suffice? Is it still misogyny if men are also so depicted? Is it misandry? Is there a masculine equivalent of misogyny? Are we still dealing with misogyny if good women are presented alongside of negative examples? Or, as some maintain, does such a balance constitute merely another misogynistic ruse? Is an obsession with women, in other words, misogynistic? Is the designation of misogyny as a topic for academic discourse ultimately a misogynistic gesture?

In attempting to identify misogyny one is to some degree always dealing with a problem of voice, the questions of who speaks and of localizing such speech. If misogyny is a topos, a virtual element, found potentially in almost any work (including those that are overwhelmingly profeminine like *Aucassin et Nicolette*), how ascribable is it to something on the order of individual authorial intention? What does it mean to say that someone like Jean de Meun, about whom relatively

little of a biographical nature is known, is a misogynist? Does it matter who speaks? How are we to read obvious delegations of voice as in the example cited by Christine? How are we to disentangle the assumed “truth of misogyny” from a literary topos that as often as not performs exactly what it ascribes to, projects upon, women—that is, seeks to deceive? Any answer to this question is, as we shall see, even further complicated by the association of women with writing and poetics.

Is misogyny an exclusively male phenomenon or is it part of a larger cultural discourse in which women also participate?¹³ This in turn raises the question of whether or not there is an essential distinction between male and female writing. Is there, for instance, a difference in kind between the *Lais* of Marie de France (about whom little is known except that she was a woman) and the anonymous Breton *lais* written presumably by men, or between the writing of Marie and that of Chrétien de Troyes?

Is misogyny restricted to the domain of literature? What is its status in the other arts? Is the question of misogyny the same as that of woman? If so, we are forced to incorporate conflicting images of woman—Eve and Mary, woman as seducer and redeemer—within the essentially negative field of antifeminism and to deal with a paradox of history: that the periods of greatest misogynistic activity can also be periods of intense woman worship, as in the example of twelfth- and thirteenth-century mariolatry.¹⁴ Then too, the mysticism current in the High Middle Ages would be unimaginable without such figures as Angela of Foligno, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Sienna, Saint Gertrude, Hildegard of Bingen, Juliana of Norwich, who were the equivalents of female prophets. It has been argued that the adoration of women, whether the Holy Virgin, the courtly lady, or the prophetess, is but another form of misogynistic investment. This returns us to the subject of whether or not idolatry is merely another form of misogyny, taking us in turn into complex issues of reading that are not fundamentally different from the interpretation of any text. What is different, and here the present essay departs from all previous discussion, is, as we shall see, the extent to which the practices of medieval hermeneutics and the discourse of misogyny are bound up in each other.

Any study of misogyny must, it seems to me, begin from two fundamental assumptions. The first is a recognition of the very real disenfranchisement of women in the Middle Ages. Such a premise is based upon careful work over the last fifteen years within the realm of social history. Few would dispute, for example, that there were from the fourth through the fourteenth centuries essential differences in men’s and women’s rights to possess, inherit, and alienate property; in their duties to pay homage and taxes; in their qualification for exemptions. To these are added differences in men’s and women’s civil and legal rights: in the rights to bear witness, collect evidence, represent oneself (or others) in judicial causes; to serve as judges or lawyers, as oath helpers; to bring suit or

to stand for election. Legal penalties for the same crime often differed substantially, as, for instance, in the punishments for adultery, for bearing children out of wedlock, for beating one's spouse. Even the mode of execution was in certain cases not the same for women as for men. Social historians in conjunction with demographers have raised radically the question of whether sons were treated better than daughters to the extent of creating a higher infant mortality rate among females. Moreover, the questions remain of whether those who survived participated equally in urban privileges such as membership in guilds and opportunity of employment; whether, when employed, wages were equivalent; whether women were allowed a role in affairs of state and especially in those of the Church, whose ideological commitment to the equality of all Christians notwithstanding, still excluded women from participation in certain offices like preaching or setting Church policy or doctrine.

All of these, and the list of material recrimination is by no means complete, are real and unavoidable issues. But they are not the same as misogyny, and one has to be careful not to move too easily between the domain of institutions and the discourse of antifeminism. For the risk, in neglecting the complicated series of intervening mediations, is entrapment in the movement of the very phenomenon one seeks to expose. The unqualified and unreflective equation of the two is tantamount to a ritual recitation of tort—yet another speaking or citation of the traditional topoi—that serves less to redress historical injustice than to naturalize it in terms of an ineluctable rule of relation between the sexes.¹⁵

Scandalous Excess

And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul. . . .

And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself.

And the Lord God having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air, brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: for whatsoever Adam called a living creature the same is its name.

And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field: but for Adam there was not found a helper like himself.

Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it.

And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam.

And Adam said: "This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man."

—Gen. 2.7–23

What often passes unnoticed in the Genesis story is the degree to which the creation of woman is linked to a founding, or original, linguistic act. Adam is said to be the first to speak, the namer of things; woman—or the necessity of

woman, her cause—seems to emanate, in turn, from the imposition of names.¹⁶ The designation of things, or a primal instance of man's exertion of power over them, and the creation of woman are coterminous. Further, in this account of the *ad seriatim* creation of the genders, woman is by definition a derivation of man, who, as the direct creation of God, remains both chronologically antecedent and ontologically prior. This at least is how early commentators on Genesis—Augustine, Jerome, Philo Judaeus—understood things. “It is not good that *any* man should be alone,” writes Philo. “For there are *two* races of men, the one made after the (Divine) Image, and the one moulded out of the earth. . . . With the second man a helper is associated. To begin with, the helper is a created one, for it says ‘Let us make a helper for him’; and in the next place, is subsequent to him who is to be helped, for He had formed the mind before and is about to form its helper.”¹⁷ Thus, woman, created from man, is conceived from the beginning to be secondary, a supplement. Here the act of naming takes on added significance. For the imposition of names and the creation of woman are not only simultaneous but analogous gestures thoroughly implicated in each other. Just as words are the supplements of things, which are supposedly brought nameless to Adam, so woman is the supplement to, the “helper” of, man. She comes into being metonymically as a part of a body more sufficient to itself because created directly by God and to whose wholeness she, as part (and this from the beginning), can only aspire.

Adam's priority implies a whole set of relations that strike to the heart not only of medieval sign theory but to certain questions of ontology that make apparent that the Fall, commonly conceived to be the origin and cause of medieval misogyny, is merely a fulfillment or logical conclusion of that which is implicit to the creation of Eve. Woman, as secondary, derivative, supervenient, and supplemental, assumes all that is inferior, debased, scandalous, and perverse.

Adam, first of all, has what medieval philosophers called substance. His nature is essential; he possesses Being, Existence. “All good is from God,” Augustine affirms, “hence there is no natural existence which is not from God.”¹⁸ Eve, as the byproduct of a part of the essential, partakes from the outset of the accidental, associated with a multiplicity of modes of degradation implicit to her coming into being as becoming.

If Adam exists fully and Eve only partially, it is because he participates in what is conceived to be an original unity of being while she is the offshoot of division and difference. And unity, another word for Being, is the goal of philosophy because it is also synonymous with truth. “Philosophy as a discipline,” writes Augustine in the *De ordine*, “itself already contains this order of knowledge, and it need not discover more than the nature of one, but in a much more profound and divine sense.”¹⁹ The oneness that Adam once enjoyed, the uniqueness of singularity, is indistinguishable from the oneness that is the founding principle, the guarantor, of grammar, geometry, philosophy; and, implicitly, of theology,

since God is defined as the nature of one, that which is universal and eternal. "Christ," writes Tertullian, "is everything which is once for all."²⁰

This is another way of saying that Adam possesses form, is the equivalent of an Idea; for that which has unity and existence also has form. "All existing things would cease to be if form were taken from them, the unchangeable form by which all unstable things exist and fulfill their functions," asserts Augustine in a formula that appears almost everywhere in the discourse of misogyny.²¹ That is, man is form or mind, and woman, degraded image of his second nature, is relegated to the realm of matter. Put in terms more appropriate to the Patristic tradition, man is spirit or soul formed directly by God, partaking of his divinity, while woman partakes of the body in which inheres, again, the principle of division.

Herein lies one possibility of reading misogyny: if man enjoys existence (substance), being, unity, form, and soul, woman is associated with accident, becoming (temporality), difference, body, and matter—and with all they imply by way of a secondariness that summons the more specific recriminations which constitute the discourse of misogyny.

Woman's supervenient nature is, above all, indistinguishable from that of all signs in relation to the signified and of representation. As Philo Judaeus maintains, her coming into being is synonymous not only with the naming of things but with a loss—within language—of the literal:

"And God brought a trance upon Adam, and he fell asleep; and He took one of his sides" and what follows (Gen. 2.21). These words in their literal sense are of the nature of a myth. For how could anyone admit that a woman, or a human being at all, came into existence out of a man's side?²²

Since the creation of woman is synonymous with the creation of metaphor, the relation between Adam and Eve is the relation of the proper to the figural, which implies always derivation, deflection, denaturing, a tropological turning away. The perversity of Eve is that of the lateral: as the outgrowth of Adam's flank, his *latus*, she retains the status of *translatio*, of translation, transfer, metaphor, trope. She is side-issue.

This link between the derivative nature of the female and that of figural representation itself explains why the great misogynistic writers of the first centuries of Christianity—Paul, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Philo, Jerome—were so obsessed by the relation of women to decoration, why they themselves were so fascinated by veils, jewels, makeup, hair style and color—in short, by anything having to do with the cosmetic. Such an obsession is evident even in the titles of the essays of, say, Tertullian: "On the Veiling of Virgins," "On the Pallium," "On the Apparel of Women." For the third-century apologist, woman is a creature who above all else and by nature covets ornamentation:

You are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are the first deserter of the divine law: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant

enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image man. On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die. And do you think about adorning yourself over and above your tunic of skins? Come, now; if from the beginning of the world the Milesians sheared sheep, and the Serians spun trees, and the Tyrians dyed, and the Phrygians embroidered with the needle, and the Babylonians with the loom, and pearls gleamed, and onyx stones flashed; if gold itself also had already issued, with the cupidity (which accompanies it), from the ground; if the mirror too, already had licence to lie so largely, Eve, expelled from paradise (Eve) already dead, would also have coveted *these* things, I imagine! No more, then, ought she *now* to crave, or be acquainted with (if she desire to live again), what, when she *was* living, she had neither had nor known. Accordingly, these things are the baggage of woman in her condemned and dead state, instituted as if to swell the pomp of her funeral.²³

If man's desire for ornament, or for that which is secondary, is analogous to man's desire for woman, it is because woman is conceived *as* ornament. She is, by her secondary nature, automatically associated with artifice, decoration. The mildest version of such a paradigm is found in the often repeated licence for men to pray with head bare while women are enjoined to be veiled—and in its corollary, that woman is covering or veil: "But if a woman nourish her hair, it is a glory to her," writes Paul, "for her hair is given to her as a covering" (1 Cor. 11.15). Woman naturally decorates herself; and, according to Tertullian, is by nature decoration:

Female habit carries with it a twofold idea—dress and ornament. By "dress" we mean what they call "womanly gracing"; by "ornament," what is suitable should be called "womanly disgracing." The former is accounted (to consist) in gold, and silver, and gems, and garments; the latter in care of the skin, and of those parts of the body which attract the eye. Against the one we lay the charge of ambition, against the other prostitution.²⁴

The traditional reading of the above passage equates a certain hostility toward women with a more generalized horror of the flesh. And yet, it is not the flesh that Tertullian denounces. On the contrary, it is the draping of the flesh with "dress and ornament" that is the equivalent of seduction:

The only edifice which they know how to raise is this silly pride of women: because they require slow rubbing that they may shine, and artful underlaying that they may show to advantage, and careful piercing that they may hang; and (because they) render to gold a mutual assistance in meretricious allurements.²⁵

To decorate oneself is to be guilty of "meretricious allurements," since embellishment of the body, a prideful attempt "to show to advantage," recreates an original act of pride that is the source of potential concupiscence. This is why Tertullian is able to move so quickly and naturally from the idea of dress to a whole range of seemingly unapparent associations—e.g., between transvestism and the monstrous; or between the toga and lust, adultery, cannibalism, intemperance, and greed.²⁶ It is as if each and every act of clothing an original nakedness associated with the sanctity of the body, and not the weakness of the flesh, were a corrupting recapitulation of the Fall entailing all other perversions.

If clothes are at once the sign, the effect, and a cause of the Fall, it is because, as artifice, they, like woman, are secondary, collateral, supplemental. Dress is unnatural since, like all artifice, it seeks to add to, to perfect, the body of nature or God's creation:

That which He Himself has not produced is not pleasing to God, unless He was *unable* to order sheep to be born with purple and sky-blue fleeces! If He was *able*, then plainly He was *unwilling*: what God willed not, of course, ought not to be fashioned. Those things, then, are not the best by *nature* which are not from God, the *Author* of nature. Thus they are understood to be from *the devil*, from *the corrupter* of nature: for there is no other whose they *can* be, if they are not God's; because what are not God's must necessarily be His rival's.²⁷

A recreation, the artificial implies a pleasurable surplus that is simply inessential:

Thus (a thing) which, from whatever point you look at it, is in *your* case superfluous, you may justly disdain if you have it not, and neglect it if you have. Let a holy woman, if naturally beautiful, give none so great occasion (for carnal appetite).²⁸

Tertullian does not, of course, seek to determine how something can be "naturally beautiful," much less to wrestle with the supervenient status of his own thought upon the superficial.²⁹ His indictment of the artificial condemns not only what we think of as the realm of the aesthetic, "adulteration with illegitimate colors," but extends to any investment of nature with human intention.³⁰ Thus the constant comparison of iron, the use value par excellence, with gold, which is perverse because its worth is extrinsic.³¹ The affinity between gold, the product of excess labor, "the arts," and women constitutes an economic nexus taken as a given; their natures, by definition inessential and antinatural, attract each other because they partake coevally in a scandalous excess that offends.³²

Here we arrive at an idea that runs deep throughout medieval thought and that indeed can be considered to constitute the essence of a certain theologizing of the aesthetic. To wit, the artificial participates in a supervenient and extraneous rival creation that can only distract man's attention from God's original "plastic skill": "Whatever is *born* is the work of God," Tertullian concludes. "Whatever is *plastered* on is the devil's work. . . . To superinduce on a divine work Satan's ingenuities, how criminal it is!"³³ The decorative not only constitutes, as in the case of gold, an artificial investment of value, with all that such intention implies by way of potential concupiscence, but is a literal adding to the "weight" of creation:

The wonder is, that there is no (open) contending against the Lord's prescripts! It has been pronounced that no one can add to his own stature. *You*, however, *do* add to your *weight* some kind of rolls, or shield-bosses, to be piled upon your necks! . . . Nay, rather banish quite away from your "free" head all this slavery of ornamentation.³⁴

From the always scandalous dressing of the naked body of nature emanates the entire range of perverse terms associated with "meretricious garbs and gar-

ments.” In particular, the church fathers move quickly, by association, from the symbolic—artifice, idolatry—to the erotic—concupiscence, fornication, adultery, as if representation itself were, always and already, an offense. Verbal signs, in particular, stand as a constant reminder of the secondary and supplemental nature of all “the arts.” “With the word the garment entered,” Tertullian asserts, implying that language is a covering that, by definition and from the start, is so wrapped up in the decorative as to be essentially perverse.³⁵

This nexus of ideas suggests that the representation of woman as ornamentation is an integral part of a broader paradigm, or that her perverse secondariness is the secondariness of all symbolic activity. The deep mistrust of the body and of the materiality of signs defined by their accessibility to the senses constitutes, in fact, a commonplace of what we know about the Middle Ages—yea, something that might be considered to constitute a cultural constant alongside of, indeed allied with, that of misogyny. God produced signs, Augustine writes, “in order to signify His presence, and to reveal Himself in them, as He Himself knows it to be fitting, but without appearing in that substance itself by which He is, and which is wholly unchangeable.”³⁶ If, as Tertullian claims, “all things that are not of God are perverse,” and if, as Augustine maintains, God is not in signs, then not only are signs perverse, but words or verbal signs stand as a particularly degraded excess. For where numbers signify permanence, reason, and order, language belies only corruption.³⁷ Words are to images in the mind as the corporeal or sensitive is to the domain of the spirit; they are secondary, derivative, supplemental, rival and potentially confusing semblances that rely upon the fallible function of sound. This is a well-known topos among Patristic writers. Where it becomes interesting for our purpose is in the explicit analogy between woman and the sensible; for, as Philo reminds us, the relation between the mind and the senses is that of man to woman:

To begin with, the helper is a created one, for it says, ‘Let us make a helper for him’; and in the next place, is subsequent to him who is to be helped, for He had formed the mind before and is about to form its helper. In these particulars again, while using terms of outward nature, he is conveying a deeper meaning. For sense and the passions are helpers of the soul and come after the soul.³⁸

The ontological status of woman is, then, analogous to that of the senses within the cognitive realm. Man as mind and woman as sensory perception are, as Philo explains, mutually exclusive: “It is when the mind (Adam) has gone to sleep that perception begins, for conversely when the mind wakes up perception is quenched.”³⁹ Woman, formed of flesh from the rib, remains bound by the corporeal. “‘He built it to be a woman’ (Gen. 2.22),” Philo continues, “proving by this that the most proper and exact name for sense perception is ‘woman.’”⁴⁰ Nor is it even necessary to distinguish between active and passive intellectual faculties.

Woman as sensitive soul is allied with the sensual; to perceive her, John Chrysostom maintains, is no less dangerous to men in general than the faculty of perception is to the soul of every man:

Hence how often do we, from beholding a woman, suffer a thousand evils; returning home, and entertaining an inordinate desire, and experiencing anguish for many days; yet nevertheless, we are not made discreet, but when we have scarcely cured one wound, we again fall into the same mischief, and are caught by the same means; and for the sake of the brief pleasure of a glance, we sustain a kind of lengthened and continual torment. . . . The beauty of a woman is the greatest snare. Or rather, not the beauty of woman, but unchastened gazing!⁴¹

Here we arrive at a series of paradoxes within the discourse of misogyny. To wit, if woman is conceived to be synonymous with the senses or perception, then any look upon a woman's beauty must be the look of a woman upon a woman, for there can be no such thing as a male gaze or desire. This is why any answer to Saint Chrysostom's question "How is it possible to be freed from desire?" must be to be free of perception, or from the feminine altogether.⁴² In this sense misogyny is bound to the desire to escape the senses, perception, the corporeal, or consciousness, which leads to the inevitable conclusion that it contains a desire for the absolute, or for a totality that is the unmistakable symptom of a death wish. Nor does the paradox end there, since the identification of misogyny with the desire for perfection is the site of another contradiction—a conflict between the keenness of the awareness of woman as flaw and the desire for wholeness, expressed in the persistent exhortation to virginity.⁴³

Misogyny as Literature

The relation between vision—the seduction of a gaze—and the erotic lies at the source both of an idealization of women in literary texts and a corresponding antifeminism. For if a look engenders desire, desire, in turn, forecloses all future possibility of seeing. This is true not only for the church fathers but for the classic misogynists of the High Middle Ages as well. Love, for Andreas Capellanus, the architect of courtly and indeed of Western romantic love, represents "a certain inbred suffering caused by sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, causing desire for embrace."⁴⁴ And yet love, identified with woman and the senses, is also synonymous with illusion, which makes it the cornerstone of the discourse of misogyny. As we shall see by way of conclusion, it is the equation of women with the illusory that serves to identify the misogynistic with the literary.

Mathieu, the antiheroic narrator of the *Lamentations*, laments less because he

has married a woman who has been married before (“Le plus chetif de tous clamés/ Pour ce que je suy bigamé” [I am called the most unfortunate because I am bigamous; book 1, lines 1074–75]) than because his intellectual functions have been troubled by a gaze:

Je me plaing, car par la *veüe*
 Fu ma science deceüe.
 Beauté par ma l’uel mon cuer navra,
 Dont jamais jour repos n’avra. . . .
 Las! povre moy, quant tant amay,
 Que par amours me bigamay.

[I complain, for by vision was my knowledge deceived. Beauty wounded my heart through my eye, and because of which I will never be at peace. . . . Alas! poor me, when I loved so much that by love I became bigamous; book 1, lines 647–58.]

Beauty, however, has turned to its opposite.⁴⁵ The difference between a happy former state and the present state of bigamous torture is a difference produced by the seductions of vision (“Je fuy seduis et afollés/ Par doulx regars, par beau langage” [I was seduced and maddened by sweet looks, by beautiful language; book 1, lines 570–71]) that now has turned to its opposite: “Mon impotence est anoncie” (My impotence is made manifest; book 1, line 1349). It is impossible, in fact, to tell if it is a loss of beauty that has diminished desire or diminished desire that has troubled perception—or rather, whether it was or was not a trouble of perception that produced desire in the first place. For vision is certainly at stake in Mathieu’s seduction:

Mieulx me venist mes yeux bander
 Au jour que premier l’avisay
 Et que sa beauté tant prisay
 Et son doulx viaire angelique
 Dessoubs la fame sophistique.

[I would have done better to shield my eyes the day I first saw her and so esteemed her beauty and her sweet angelic face covering sophisticated woman; book 1, lines 626–30.]

Here the connection is established between bigamy, seduction, and sophistication. Woman, feminine or sophisticated beauty, is that which seduces not only because it appeals to the senses but because it corrupts them, one by one:

Mes cinq sens sont mortifiés
 Mes yeuls ne peuent regarder
 Je ne puis a goust savourer
 Ne je ne puis rien odourer,
 Si ne sçay taster de mes mains

Tant com je souloie, mais mains,
Et de mes oreilles n'oy goute.

[My five senses are mortified, my eyes cannot see. . . . I cannot taste or smell anything, nor can I feel anything with my hands as I used to be able, but less; and my ears don't hear a thing; book 1, lines 1510–16.]

Thus we encounter a familiar paradox: before marriage the senses are seduced and distorted by desire, yet after marriage they are distorted by abuse, or by the tears of lamentation that distort vision. There is, then, no moment at which woman does not trouble vision, distort and destroy the senses. This is because the seducing sophistication of woman is that of illusion itself; she is by definition not only sophisticated (e.g., dirty, illusory) but is posited as that which exists in distinction to reason. If, as Mathieu admits, “By her sight my knowledge [*science*] was troubled,” it is because woman is conceived as that which escapes logic. Rather, she is portrayed as a kind of false logic, the sophism that vanquishes both grammar and logic: “En ce fu grammaire traïe / Et logique moult esbaïe” (In this was grammar betrayed and logic greatly confounded; book 1, lines 1105–6). Together grammar and logic constitute within the medieval language arts the *trivium*, the sciences of the true, respectively of rectitude of expression and of correct propositions. Woman, however, is posited as the opposite of the truth: “Femme de verité n’a cure” (Woman cares not at all for truth; book 1, line 966). More precisely, she becomes, in the misogynistic thinking of the High Middle Ages, associated with the third element of the *trivium*—rhetoric, the art of persuasion that, by the thirteenth century, was synonymous with poetics. Woman is figured as the sophist, the dissimulator (“Faindre et dissimuler convient” (To feign and trick comes naturally; book 1, line 1024), the seducer with false arguments or subtlety: “Oultre les tençons et les limes / Par cinq manieres de sophismes / La femme meine l’omme a methé” (In addition to arguments and quarrels woman brings man to his end with five kinds of sophism”; book 1, lines 843–45). Here just before ending I would like to stop for a moment on the word *methé*, which from Latin *meta*, *metae* means “a mark or boundary, an end, period, or turning point.” But the resonance of *methodium*, “a witty conceit, jest, or joke,” is also there, as is that of *metus*, “fear.” Moreover, the careful reader, aware of the extent to which medieval vernacular poets loved word play, cannot help but recognize in *methé* a part of the poet’s name—Mathieu or Matheolus brought by woman to his end. But why not all four—end, joke, fear, and the name of the poet? After all, if woman is by definition the sign of an always present bigamy, she is also the very figure of ambiguity (“figure d’amphibolie”; book 1, line 1144): the one who through the ruse that is her power works against logic and grammar (*methodice*) to trouble the senses with sophisms: “Avec la langue est la veüe / Par le sophisme deceüe” (book 1, lines 903–4).

Here we have come full circle, since the alliance of women with rhetoric against grammar and logic places her on the side of the poet, whose interference with univocal meaning is equated with noise—noise, furthermore, specifically related to the defining secondariness with which we began:

Pourquoy sont femmes plus noiseuses,
 Plaines de paroles oiseuses
 Et plus jangleuses que les hommes?
 Car elles sont d'os et nous sommes
 Fais de terre en nostre personne:
 L'os plus haut que la terre sonne.

[Why are women more noisy, full of foolish words, and more garrulous than men? Because they are made of bones and our persons are made of clay: bones rattle louder than earth; book 2, lines 241–46.]

More than mere encumbering ambiguity, woman is defined, above all, as embodying the spirit of contradiction: “Je ne sçai de chose passé/ Ne du temps present rien retraire/ Qu'elle ne die le contraire” (I know how to say nothing, past or present, that she does not say the opposite; book 1, lines 1300–1302). As man's copy or image, his double, she doubles perniciously everything he says: “Elle est de trop parler isnelle/ Et en parlant a double ment,/ Pourquoy je peris doublement” (She is too quick to speak; and in speaking she lies twice, by which I perish doubly; book 1, lines 1291–92). Nor is Jehan Le Fèvre's characterization unique. Andreas Capellanus, to cite another prominent example, concurs:

No woman can make you such a firm promise that she will not change her mind about the matter in a few minutes. . . . Woman is by nature a slanderer of other women, greedy, a slave to her belly, inconstant, fickle in her speech . . . a liar, a drunkard, a babbler, no keeper of secrets. . . . Even for a trifle a woman will swear falsely. . . . Every woman is also loud-mouthed. . . . When she is with other women, no one of them will give the others a chance to speak, but each always tries to be the one to say whatever is to be said and to keep on talking longer than the rest; and neither her tongue nor her spirit ever gets tired out by talking. . . . A woman will boldly contradict everything you say.⁴⁶

Neither the portrayal of woman as endless garrulousness nor as contradiction would be so significant if it were not for the defining rhetorical context of all misogynistic literature, which seeks to dissuade from marriage and to do so precisely by speaking, often at great length. How, it may be asked, does the desire of women to speak differ from that of the writer who, like Walter Map, author of the “Dissuasion of Valerius to Rufinus the Philosopher That He Should Not Take a Wife,” repeats in the space of only two pages: “I am forbidden to speak, and I cannot keep silence. . . . So I am forbidden to speak—I the prophet of truth. . . . I cannot keep silence. . . . I cannot keep silence . . . therefore I cannot keep silence. . . . I am forbidden to speak. . . . Therefore I cannot keep silence. . . . I

am forbidden to speak. . . . You should make allowance for me who, in the impatience of my affection, cannot keep silence.”⁴⁷

If a woman is defined as verbal transgression, indiscretion, and contradiction, then Walter Map, indeed any writer, can only be defined as a woman; and the discourse of misogyny then becomes a plaint against the self or against writing itself. For Walter is no less fickle than Andreas accuses all women of being: “No woman ever makes up her mind so firmly on any subject that she will not quickly change it on a little persuading from anyone. A woman is like melting wax, which is always ready to take a new form and to receive the impress of anyone’s seal.”⁴⁸ And the very works that bemoan the instability of women are attempts to achieve what they denounce; they perform what in their own terms is the otherness of which hatred of the sexual other is the thematic analogue. Put another way, the author seeks to do to his interlocutor—whether the anonymous Walter or Rufinus—precisely that of which he accuses women: to deceive with words, to provoke contradiction, and to seduce with what is defined as the essence of the feminine: the ruses of rhetoric.⁴⁹ The misogynistic writer uses rhetoric as a means of renouncing it, and, by extension, woman; he “cheats,” in the phrase of Andreas, “one trick with another” (*Courtly Love*, 205). This, perhaps, is the greatest ruse of all, for the confession of contradiction, which Walter Map equates with “the goodwill of the writer and the honesty of the written page” (*De nugis*, 164), is no less of an aporia than Andreas’s concluding advice:

Now this doctrine of ours, which we have put into this little book for you, will if carefully and faithfully examined seem to present two different points of view. In the first part . . . we set down completely, one point after another, the art of love. . . . In the latter part of the book . . . we added something about the rejection of love.⁵⁰

Thus the book is all that it claims to reject: contradiction, deceit, seduction, a source of mischief and of mistrust. “We know that everything a woman says is said with the intention of deceiving, because she always has one thing in her heart and another on her lips,” Andreas inveighs in a phrase whose unreadability warns against nothing so much as itself (*Courtly Love*, 204).

This is a way of suggesting, by way of conclusion, that the reader’s own strategy can only be one of mistrust of the writer and of the text—which returns us to the problem of reading. How do we distinguish, finally, persuasion from dissuasion? How do we mark the difference, for example, between Andreas’s prescription, “If you want to get a woman to do anything, you can get her to do it by ordering her to do the opposite” (*Courtly Love*, 206), and the opening injunction to the reader, “Friend Walter”: “Read this little book, then, not as one seeking to take up the life of the lover, but that, invigorated by the theory and trained to excite the minds of women to love, you may, by refraining from so doing, win an eternal recompense” (*Courtly Love*, 187). There is no way of determining with certainty Andreas’s intent—whether to urge to convince or desist—and ultimately

whether he wants us to take literally the warning against love or ourselves to be seduced by the letter. He, and any other author for that matter, performs that which he denounces Eve for having done—seduces, in the words of Tertullian, “by mere words,” disobeys his own injunctions. The danger of woman, according to this reading of the phenomenon of misogyny, is that of literature itself.

Notes

1. See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York, 1963), part 1, qu. 92; part 3, qu. 32. Innocent III is particularly virulent on the topic of woman. “Menstrual blood,” he writes, “ceases in the female after conception so that the child in her womb will be nourished by it. And this blood is reckoned so detestable and impure that on contact with it fruits will fail to sprout, orchards go dry, herbs wither, the very trees let go their fruit; if a dog eat of it, he goes mad. When a child is conceived, he contacts the defect of the seed, so that lepers and monsters are born of this corruption”; *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, trans. Mary Dietz (New York, 1969), 9. In the misogynistic thinking of the Middle Ages, there can, in fact, be no distinction between the theological and the gynecological. Woman is a limit case of man who remains, as in Platonic thought, bound by the material, by flesh and lust. “Man was formed of dust, slime, and ashes, what is even more vile, of the filthiest seed. He was conceived from the itch of the flesh, in the heat of passion and the stench of lust, and worse yet, with the stain of sin”; *ibid.*, 6.
2. It can be no accident, as Catherine Brown pointed out in my seminar, that the discourse of misogyny, which represents an attempt to speak of the other through the voice of the other, is so closely allied with the literary form or register whose very name implies “speaking otherwise.”
3. *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Daniel Poirion (Paris, 1974), lines 8561–70.
4. John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. J. B. Pike (Minneapolis, 1938), 357.
5. Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Cambridge, 1957), lines 248–52.
6. “Ce n’est pas merveille trop dure / Se le mari nul temps ne dure / Contre sa femme mal pitieuse, / Envers la tençon rioteuse / Que souvent li scet aprestre” (It is no great wonder if the husband doesn’t last very long against his pitiless wife, if he doesn’t hold out against the riotous arguments that she knows how to prepare for him); Jehan Le Fèvre, *Les Lamentations de Matheolus*, ed. A.-G. Van Hamel (Paris, 1872), lines 829–33.
7. “Car um puet oyr sovent / Um fol parler sagement. / Sage est qe parle sagement”; *Receuil général et complet des fabliaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles*, ed. A. de Montaiglon, 6 vols. (Paris, 1872), 2:256.
8. Cited by Victor Le Clerc, “Les Fabliaux,” in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. 23 (Paris, 1895), 98.
9.

Et cil qui font les mariages,
 Si ont trop merveilloz usages,
 Et coustume si despareille
 Qu’il me vient a trop grant merveille.
 Ne sai d’u vient ceste folie,

Fors de rage et de desverie.
 Je voi que qui cheval achete
 Ja n'iert si fox que rienz y mete,
 Comment que l'en l'ait bien couvert,
 Sil ne le voit a descouvert;
 Par tout le regarde et descueuvre.
 Mes la fame si bien se cueuvre,
 Ne ja n'i sera decouverte,
 Ne por gaaingne ne por perte,
 Ne por solaz ne por mesese,
 Por ce, sans plus, que ne desplese
 Devant qu'elle soit espousee.

[And those who marry have a most unusual and unnerving way of operating that surprises me greatly. I don't know whence this foolishness can come except from madness and rage. For a man who buys a horse would not be so crazy as to put any money down if he had not seen it uncovered first, no matter how well covered it was in the first place. He looks it all over and uncovers it. But woman covers herself so well that she can never be uncovered—neither for gain nor for loss, neither for solace nor for grief; for this, and no more, that she might not displease before being wed; *Roman de la rose*, lines 8661–77.]

10. Innocent III, *Misery*, 20. Chaucer repeats the topos: "Thow seyst that droppying houses, and eek smoke,/And chiding wyves maken men to flee/Out of hir owene hous"; "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," lines 278–80.
11. *Le Débat sur le "Roman de la rose": Edition critique, introduction, traductions, notes*, ed. Eric Hicks (Paris, 1977), 15.
12. *Ibid.*, 35.
13. Christine, whom no one would consider a misogynist, addresses the Provost of Lille in self-deprecating terms that, despite the possibility of sarcasm, would be taken as evidence of misogyny if from the pen of a man: "Bien est vray que mon petit entendement y considère grant joliveté . . ." (While it is true that my little understanding finds very amusing . . .). Then again, even so important a female figure as Hildegard of Bingen appropriates certain theological presuppositions that serve as the ontological basis of much of the misogynistic thinking of the Middle Ages: "When God saw man he saw that he was very good, for man was made in his image. But in creating woman, God was aided by man. . . . Therefore woman is the creation of man. . . . Man symbolizes the divinity of the Son of God and woman his humanity. Therefore man presides in the courts of this world since he rules over all creatures, while woman is under his rule and submits to him"; cited in Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages* (London, 1983), 57.
14. This is a historical aporia implicit to psychoanalytic explanations of misogyny in terms of male anger at rejecting mothers as well as to anthropological explanations involving the collective anxiety of males in dealing with the fear of feminine power. The difficulty of the former is that in biologizing misogyny it is at the same time naturalized, since there can be no escape from the basic cultural process expressed in the oedipal imposition of the father between mother and son and the son's concomitant anger. The problem with the latter is of a more logical order. To wit, if misogyny is the symptom of men's fear of the real power of women, then the more misogynistic a culture is, the stronger females can be assumed to be; in this way antifeminism represents not the derogation of women but an expression of their material enfranchisement.

- ment. See Katharine M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle, 1966); H. R. Hayes, *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil* (New York, 1964).
15. Leaving aside the unknowable affective element of woman-hating, misogyny is a way of speaking about women as distinct from doing something to women, though speaking may be a form of doing and even of social practice, or at least its ideological component. Misogyny is a speech act such that the subject of the sentence is woman and the predicate is a more general term.
 16. See my *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1983), 37–44.
 17. Philo, *On the Creation* (London, 1929), 227.
 18. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. J. H. S. Burleigh (London, 1953), 169.
 19. Augustine, *De ordine*, ed. J. Jolivet (Paris, 1948), 444.
 20. Tertullian, “On Exhortation to Chastity,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 4 (Buffalo, 1885), 54.
 21. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 163. This is also an important concept in the Aristotelian tradition according to which in procreation man supplies the form and woman the matter; see in particular *De la génération des animaux*, ed. P. Louis (Paris, 1961), 3–5, 39–43.
 22. Philo, *On the Creation*, 237.
 23. Tertullian, “On the Apparel of Women,” in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:14.
 24. *Ibid.*, 16. 25. *Ibid.*
 26. Tertullian, “On the Pallium,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:9, 12.
 27. Tertullian, “On the Apparel,” 17. 28. *Ibid.*, 20.
 29. One of the salient ironies of misogynistic discourse is that it often becomes rhetorical or ornamental in direct proportion to the extent to which it denounces woman as ornament.
 30. Tertullian, “On the Apparel,” 17.
 31. “So true is it that it is not intrinsic worth, but rarity, which constitutes the goodness (of those things): the excessive labour, moreover, of working them with arts introduced by means of the sinful angels, who were revealers withal of the material substances themselves, joined with their rarity, excited their costliness, and hence a lust on the part of women to possess (that) costliness”; *ibid.*, 23.
 32. “For they who rub their skin with medicaments, stain their cheeks with rouge, make their eyes prominent with antimony, sin against HIM. To them, I suppose, the plastic skill of God is displeasing! In their own persons, I suppose, they convict, they censure, the Artificer of all things. For censure they do when they amend, when they add to, (His work); taking these, their additions, of course, from the adversary artificer. That adversary artificer is the devil”; *ibid.*, 20–21.
 33. *Ibid.* 34. *Ibid.*
 35. Tertullian, “On the Pallium,” 8.
 36. Augustine, *De trinitate* (Washington, D.C., 1963), 105.
 37. “From that time forth she [Reason] found it hard to believe that the splendor and purity [of numbers] was sullied by the *corporeal matter of words*. And just as what the spirit sees is always present and is held to be immortal and numbers appear such, which sound, being a sensible thing is lost into the past”; Augustine, *De ordine*, 434.
 38. Philo, *On the Creation*, 227. 39. *Ibid.*, 237. 40. *Ibid.*, 249.
 41. Saint Chrysostom, Homily 15, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. P. Schaff, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1956), 441.
 42. Saint Chrysostom, Homily 17, *ibid.*, 10:116.

43. Virginity as such is obviously a concept crucial to the study of misogyny, one too vast for even superficial treatment within the limits of the present essay. Suffice it to say that virginity, like misogyny itself, is impossible to locate since the ever narrowing definitions given by the church fathers relegate it to the realm of a pure idea. To be more precise, virginity contains a historical reference to Adam and Eve and to a theological state of man, as in Augustine's notion of technical virgins who reproduce in paradise without desire or pleasure; it contains a doctrinal reference to Mary, the Virgin who redeems Eve; and it is associated on an individual level with a lack of personal sexuality. It is here that the concept of virginity becomes more interesting, since the more one seeks to fill the category, the more elusive it becomes; and the Patristics, in their desire for the absolute (which, as absolute, is synonymous with virginity), are not satisfied until the concept of virginity, like woman, is emptied of sense. It is not enough, for example, merely to be chaste; in order to be a virgin it is necessary never to have experienced desire. Nor is the absence of desire sufficient; the stimulation of desire in another impugns one's own chastity; see John Chrysostom, Homily 15, 443. And since desire is engendered by, and can consist in, a look, a virgin, seen, is no longer a virgin. "Every public exposure of an honorable virgin is (to her) a suffering of rape," Tertullian maintains ("On the Veiling of Virgins," 29). Jerome even wonders if it is licit for virgins to bathe since, in seeing their own bodies, there is always the potential for desire: "For myself, however, I wholly disapprove of baths for a virgin of full age. Such an one should blush and feel overcome at the idea of seeing herself undressed"; Letter 107, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 6:194. Thus there are only two possibilities: 1) virginity, as an absolute, a totality or Idea, does not exist; 2) the abstraction that virginity implies is destroyed by its articulation. This is another way of saying that the loss of virginity implied in its exposure is analogous to the loss of universality of an Idea implicit to its expression; or, there is no way of talking about virginity that does not imply a loss since the universal is always veiled by the defiling garment of words. In that case, virginity itself becomes a veil. (Jerome speaks of the "veil of chastity"; *ibid.*, 192). Language becomes the ornament, the veil, that defiles the virgin by exposure, since the senses, equated with the body, have no direct access to an Idea, allied with the soul. "No one," John Chrysostom writes, "has anywhere seen a soul by itself stripped of the body"; "Letters to the Fallen Theodore," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 9:104.

44. Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John J. Parry (New York, 1969), 28.

45. Las! or ay le cuer trop marri.
 Car orendroit est tant ripeuse,
 Courbée, boëue et tripeuse,
 Desfigurée et contrefaite
 Que ce semble estre une contraite.
 Rachel est Lya devenue,
 Toute grise, toute chenue,
 Rude, mal entendant et sourde,
 En tous ses fais est vile et lourde;
 Le pis a dur et les mamelles,
 Qui tant souloient estre belles,
 Sont froncies, noires, souillies
 Com bourses de bergier mouillies.

[Alas! now my heart is very sad, for she is now so mangy, stooped, hump-backed and pot-bellied, disfigured and undone that she seems to be a deformed person. Rachel has become Leah, all grey, white-haired, rough,

senile, and deaf. In all she does she is heavy and vile; her chest is hard and her breasts that used to be beautiful are wrinkled, black, spotted like the wet bags of a shepherd; *Lamentations*, book 1, lines 672–84.]

46. Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 201, 204, 207.
47. Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. Montague R. James (London, 1923), 160–61.
48. Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 204.
49. How, one might ask, can the reader to whom the work is addressed be other than a woman as defined in Andreas's own terms as the one subject to persuasion: "Woman is commonly found to be fickle, too, because no woman ever makes up her mind so firmly on any subject that she will not quickly change it on a little persuading from anyone"; *ibid.*, 204.
50. *Ibid.*, 210.



Sodomy, Misogyny, and Displacement: Occluding Queer Desire in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"

Author(s): DAVID L. BOYD

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Sodomy, Misogyny, and Displacement: Occluding Queer Desire in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

DAVID L. BOYD

By the late fourteenth century, the institution of chivalry had already lost much of its social value. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* attempts to defend chivalric ideals by blaming their decline on external forces: queer male behavior and desire that derives from the deceptions and wiles of women. (DLB)

A maid loved Graecinus, Graecinus loved a boy,
And the boy was taken only with the maid.
Graecinus handed her over to the boy, the boy
gave himself to Graecinus,
And both man and boy enjoyed the fruits of their desire.
—Thirteenth-century Latin verse

She's got you questioning your manhood.
Only a woman could do that.
—*Night of the Queerwolf*

The Army requires fellow soldiers to form close bonds founded on caring and concern, yet it forbids them from caring for each other too much. Thus, slapping each other on the butt with a wet towel is an acceptable gesture only if a 'fag' joke follows to defuse it. From buttocks-grabbing to sexually laden double entendres, the aura of homoeroticism is ever-present. Yet even as the Army promotes certain of what can only be called gay values, it teaches its recruits to hate what it is teaching. The message is confusing, to say the least.
—Sergeant José Zuniga

The primary focus of the late fourteenth-century alliterative poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is late medieval chivalric life, a focus that subtly defends chivalry as not responsible for its own 'decline.'¹ Such a defense was not entirely unnecessary. Chivalry had in the past traditionally energized and defined the male aristocratic order and upper-class masculine subjectivity through a felicitous combination of religious, martial, and courtly (love) codes.²

After its glorious Arthurian reinstitution through Edward III, however, chivalry had gradually begun to lose its intrinsic social value or mission. Fast becoming a formalist exercise and increasingly criticized, it attempted to relive through pageantry, hollow manners, futile aggression, and silly challenges a glorious past that could valorize a somewhat problematic present-day nobility.³

By employing a whimsically intended (though homophobically grounded) allusion to sodomy as an integral part of the 'plot,' *Sir Gawain* defends chivalry—at least chivalric ideals—by setting off a chain of events attempting to salvage, if not chivalric practices, at least the ideals on which they were based. This attempt is a clever one, for while not denying chivalry's decline, the poem blames the decline on outside forces: queer male behavior and desire that ultimately derive from the deceits and wiles of women. By shifting the focus from chivalry's internal problematics to external threat, *Sir Gawain* subtly constructs 'unnatural' sexual activity as a threat to chivalric culture's stability. Such a construction, in turn, doubly displaces any blame for such decline onto perverse transgressive forces *extrinsic* to this noble way of life. That these extrinsic forces ultimately derive from the deceits and wiles of women constitutes a clever move as well. By emphasizing the idea of sodomy as yet another device through which women attempt to confound—and to reinterpret—masculine culture, the poem misogynistically protects and justifies those very ideological formations through which aristocratic male subjectivity is (re)produced—and through which women are controlled—hence justifying the need for chivalry's fundamental basis.⁴ By blaming such a decline neither on practical instabilities within the imperatives of chivalric practices—something which Malory, writing three quarters of a century later, was not hesitant to do—nor on the possibility that chivalry was losing its former privileged position in a rapidly changing world, *Sir Gawain* reinforces homophobia and misogyny as proper, displacing responses to the threat of cultural decline.⁵

SODOMY AND THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The sodomitical allusion to which I have referred and through which such a queer reading eventuates appears in the humorous events surrounding Gawain's adventures in Bertilak's castle. Structurally, it derives from the poem's original combination of the exchange-of-winnings motif set up between Bertilak and Gawain and the subsequent bedroom scenes in which Gawain is tempted sexually by Bertilak's wife.⁶ While the jovial game is apparently underwritten by a homosocial concern to demonstrate loyalty and friendship, the system of

exchanges it proposes employs a legal contractual rhetoric effectively binding Gawain to his agreed participation in the mutual exchange:

'Ȝet firre,' quop þe freke, 'a forwarde we make:
 Quat-so-euer I wynne in þe wod hit worþez to yourez,
 And quat chek so ȝe acheue chaunge me þerforne.
 Swete, swap we so, sware with trawþe,
 Queþer, leude, so lymþ, lere oþer better.'
 'Bi God,' quop Gawayn þe gode, 'I grant þertylle,
 And þat yow lyst for to layke, lef hit me þynkes.'

['Yet moreover,' said the man, 'let us make agreement: / Whatever I might win in the woods becomes yours / And whatever [ill] gain you achieve you will exchange with me. / My sweet man, let us swap thus, swear with truth, / Whichever falls to us, better or worse.' 'By God,' said Gawain, 'I assent to this, / If it pleases you to play, it seems good [delightful] to me. ']

Despite the foreboding use of 'chek' (ill-gain) to describe Gawain's potential winnings, this diversion, which continues for three days, initially seems innocent enough. Yet, as both medieval literature and psychoanalysis have taught us, such innocence usually conceals a deeper motive typically based on power and domination. Bertilak's game is no different. By securing Gawain's confinement to bed, the lord also assures that, as part of a larger plan to test the young knight, Lady Bertilak will have the opportunity to tempt him sexually (Dean 1971, 1–12).

As Gawain stays in bed each morning, Lady Bertilak stealthily enters his bedchamber and attempts to seduce him. Certainly, there are many consequences of Gawain's behavior in this seduction scheme—issues of adultery, disloyalty, and even death (D. Brewer 1980, 81)—but what is most striking about the prospect of sex with the Lady is that it produces a radical rereading of the homosocial exchange game's implications. For, in this apparently heterosexual situation concerning the exchange of the Lady between the two men, the previous homosocial agreement would subtly suggest another possible outcome of Gawain's potential adultery as well. If Gawain had intercourse with Lady Bertilak, who would serve as his receptacle for sexual activity (his gain), he would be required to give to Bertilak what he had received. But since Gawain could not very well 'return' the Lady's receptacle to Bertilak in this manner, and therefore reveal the adultery, might not the text imply that the only receptacle logically available to Bertilak as an act of exchange possibly be Gawain's own?⁸

While such a possibility might seem troubling to modern readers for whom homosexual sodomy would not be a true exchange but rather a substitution

of one dissimilar orifice for another, we should recall that medieval gender and sexuality are as much about positionality—active/passive, top/bottom—as they are about genitality *per se*. *Sir Gawain* cleverly sets up the possibility of such a substitutive exchange as easily fulfilling the game's requirements. While the verb Bertilak uses to govern his exchange to Gawain ('worpez') indicates that the older man's winnings will indeed become the younger's, the verb used for the exchange from Gawain to Bertilak ('chaunge') also carries the potential meaning 'to substitute.'⁹ Hence Gawain gives to Bertilak an equivalent substitute (i.e. himself as receptacle) in place of what he received from the Lady. After all, this is *exactly* what he does throughout the first two exchanges: the hugs and kisses he receives from the Lady and later gives to Bertilak each night are not her original kisses but rather his own which mimic, replace, and substitute for them. That a similar scenario would take place with the outcome of the potential sexual act between Gawain and the Lady simply follow out the text's logic. To paraphrase Alan of Lille's rhetoric, the use of Gawain's hammer (penis) with the Lady would later allow the conversion of his anus into a 'false' anvil (vaginal receptacle) for Bertilak.

Before foregrounding the subtextual significance(s) of this implicit exchange (and to attempt to overcome the reader's resistance to such a queer proposition), I should note that such active/passive, hetero/homo positioning and the potential substitution/exchange of receptacles would probably have been more familiar to medieval readers not just of fabliaux but of romance as well, who no doubt would have grasped more readily the sodomitical implications of this temptation. The love triangle created, or rather *forced* upon Gawain, clearly reenacts a typical situation in medieval literature: the younger man placed in a sexual situation with an older man's wife. But, such triangulation is also not an uncommon device for employing apparently heterosexual situations and temptation as a means through which homosexual activity (and desire) can manifest themselves. This conflation appears not only in writings such as the fabliaux and my first epigraph to this essay—

Graecinum virgo, puerum Graecinus amabat,
et puer in sola virgine captus erat.
Tradidit hanc puero Graecinus, se puer illi,
et fruitur voto virque puerque suo.¹⁰

—but also in the Norman French *Eneas*. Circulating in England even as late as the fourteenth century, this popular adaptation of the Virgilian epic depicts Lavinia's mother, the evil queen, representing Eneas as a sodomite who will simply use her daughter to seduce boys for his sexual pleasure, to satisfy his homosexual desire. That is,

se il avoit alcun godel,
 ce li seroit et bon et bel
 quel laissasses a ses druz faire;
 S'il lo pooit par toi atraire,
 nel troveroit ja si estrange
 qu'il ne feist asez tel change,
 que il feist son bon de toi
 por ce qu'il lo sofrist do soi;
 bien lo lairot sor toi monter,
 s'il repueit sor lui troter;
 il n'aime pas poil de conin.

[If he finds any sweet boy, it will seem fair and good to him that you let him pursue his love. And if he can attract the boy by means of you, he will not find it too outrageous to make an exchange, so that the boy will have his pleasure from you, while in turn sufficing for him. He will gladly let the boy mount you, if he in turn can ride him: he does not love coney fur.]¹¹

I do not mean to suggest from these contextualizing passages that *Sir Gawain* reveals Bertilak as a lecherous sodomite so desirous of Gawain that he will traffick his wife to bed the young chevalier but rather that the situation resonates with similar homosexual *energia*. Although the use of sodomy is more explicit in these texts, the women here, much as does Lady Bertilak in the English poem, become heterosexual objects through which homosexual acts proceed and queer desire is channelled; and like the situation in which Gawain is placed, the boys' active sexual roles become the means through which their passive ones eventuate.¹² Hence, the Lady's sexual temptation thus implicitly threatens to position Gawain in a triangular relationship where (hetero)sex with Bertilak's wife would also entail (homo)sex with Bertilak. Gawain would not only pervert the homosocial relationship with the lord into a homosexual one but, just as being hunted and entrapped by the Lady manipulates him into a position traditionally assigned to the courtly female, would also force him into a passive sexual role—a castrating and feminizing role which was thought to turn a 'cock into a hen.'

Gawain's temptation situates not just himself but also Bertilak in a transgressive sexual situation—though the lord would be forced into the less disparaged *active* role. In other words, Gawain's submission to the Lady's desires would effectively position Bertilak, much as are the active partners in my other examples, to commit sodomy as well. But here there is a difference, for the agent of homosexual desire would apparently not be the 'older man' but the 'boy.' Still unaware of Bertilak's involvement in the temptation game, Gawain would find himself responsible for his new friend's (and lord's)

predicament, for the 'forward' binds *both* males to participate in the act of exchange. Gawain would not only bear the guilt of perverting an act of homosocial bonding and dishonoring himself but would also doubly dishonor his lord (through sodomy and adultery). Though I shall return to this point, when Gawain ponders—and finally rejects—the Lady's offer—

He cared for his cortaysye, lest crapaun he were,
 And more for his meschef ȝif he schulde make synne,
 And be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aȝt.
 'God schylde,' quop þe schalk, 'þat schal not befall!'
 (ll. 1773–76)

(He cared for his courtesy, lest he might be a churl, / And more for his harm if he should sin, / And be traitor to that knight who owned the dwelling. / 'God forbid,' said the man, 'that shall not befall!')

—it is difficult not to detect, however subtly voiced, such concerns implicit in this dismissal.¹³

Despite the humor inherent in this section of *Sir Gawain*, the threatening implications the exchange game for Arthur's knight (who traditionally represents the height of chivalry, masculinity, and heteronormative sexuality) are formidable. Gawain is knight of the pentangle—that marvellous device, potentiated by the image of the Virgin Mary, which represents the interdependent moral, religious, and martial codes through which masculine identity is formed.¹⁴ According to the significance of the pentangle's fifth point, he must practice sexual and spiritual 'clanness' (chastity or purity) (l. 53) to keep this identity intact. The shield's specification of cleanness is significant, for, as Theodore Silverstein points out in his critical edition of the poem, this virtue does not normally appear as part of chivalric groupings.¹⁵ I would suggest that in *Sir Gawain* the addition of 'clanness' also connotes, among other things, the risk of sodomy to Gawain's masculinity, for the word in the *Gawain*-poet's canon is also specifically employed as oppositional, not just to adultery and sexual lewdness, but to same-sex intercourse as well.

This homosexual employment of this word occurs in the homiletic poem *Cleanness*, one of the three poems also by the *Gawain*-poet which create a thematically rich but preemptive intertextual hermeneutic through which *Sir Gawain* was read in the illustrated Ms. Cotton Nero A.x.¹⁶ Speaking to Abraham in *Cleanness*, God describes the activities of the Sodomites and condemns homosexual sodomy as both unclean and antipodal to heterosexual intercourse:

þay han lerned a lyst þat lykez me ille,
 þat þay han founden in her flesch of fautez þe werst:

vch male matz his mach a man as hymselfuen,
 And fylter follyly in fere on femmalez wyse.
 I compast hem a kynde crafte and kende hit hem derne,
 And amed hit in Myn ordenaunce oddely dere,
 And dyȝt drwry þerinne, doole alþer-swettest,
 And þe play of paramorez I portrayed Myseluen,
 And made þerto a maner myriest of oþer:
 When two true togeder had tyȝed hemseluen,
 Welnyȝe pure paradys moȝt preue no better;
 Elles þay moȝt honestly ayþer oþer welde,
 At a styлле stollen steuen, vnstereð wth syȝt,
 Luf-lowe hem bytwene lasched so hote
 Þat alle þe meschefeȝ on mold moȝt hit not sleke.
 Now haf þay skyfted My skyl and scorned natwre
 And henttez hem in heȝyng an vsage unclene.

(ll. 693–710)

[They have learned a lust (pleasure) that ill-pleases me, / That they have founded in their flesh the worst of faults: / Each male takes for a mate a man as himself, / And they join together lewdly as (a man) with a woman. / I devised for them a natural [lawful] craft and taught it to them in secret, / And esteemed it as singularly precious in my ordinaunce, / And ordained love-making therein, intercourse as the sweetest of all / And the play of paramours I fashioned myself, / And made the manner of it the merriest of all: / When two people joined themselves together, / Pure paradise might prove itself no better; / If they would honestly possess one another / At a private, secret rendezvous, undisturbed by sight, / The love-flame between them would burn so hotly / That all the mischief in the world might not quench it. / Now they have altered my devising and scorned nature / And contemptuously founded (in themselves) an unclean custom.]

As an unclean usage of male bodies which feminizes one of them, homosexual activity scorns the sweet heteronormativity sanctioned by Nature and God. For Gawain as well, such uncleanness would have dire consequences: since his homosexual role would be passive, he would act on 'femmalez wyse' through his treachery of Bertilak and would lose his sense of masculine self, unravelling the 'endeles knot' (l. 630).¹⁷ Since many of the other themes, images, and phrases from the manuscript's poems are employed in *Sir Gawain*,¹⁸ 'clanness' here becomes quite significant since Gawain's situation is one that involves both adultery and sodomy. Furthermore, such an intertextual reading strongly suggests that potential sodomy, at least as much as adultery, subtends his deliberative concern over 'synne' in lines 1773–76, especially since elsewhere in *Cleanness* sodomites are referred to as 'traytours' (l. 1041) as well.¹⁹

But the implications of this threat to Gawain have even greater consequences for sexual politics than just the destruction of masculine identity. I can best demonstrate these consequences by turning briefly to the 1323–24 confessions of the French Franciscan aspostate Arnold Verniolle and his male sexual partners. In reading both Arnold's testimony and that of the boys with whom he had engaged in sexual relations—'Arnold got completely undressed, embraced the naked youth, kissed him, placed his penis between Guillaume's buttocks, and, moving himself as with a woman, his semen flowed between the speaker's [Guillaume's] legs'²⁰—one will recall that heterosexual activity is frequently for Arnold a way to satisfy homosexual desire. Sometimes Arnold and a youth 'demonstrate' heterosexual activity on each other (making it homosexual); at other times, Arnold encourages a young man to have sex with a woman as an 'appetizer' kindling the youth's desire for Arnold (thus heterosexual activity is actually homosexual foreplay); and finally, Arnold and a youth might, while together, engage in heterosexual activity with two women (thus Arnold's homosexual desire is satisfied through mediation of group heterosexual activity).

Arnold's case reveals that the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual activity, especially when homosexual desire or expectation is concerned, is not as clear-cut as *Cleanness* contends. In *Sir Gawain*, the consequence of the Lady's temptations would in fact tend to undermine this very distinction as well—and, furthermore, would disclose the possibility that heterosexual and homosexual acts are sometimes identical (at least in intent) and could even occur not just *through*, but simultaneously *in*, an apparently (hetero)sexual act.²¹ Since Gawain knows that he must give his winnings or their likeness to Bertilak before the Lady approaches him, then sex with her, both the heterosexual act itself and the *desire* to commit it become homosexual—at the very least, a temporary or preliminary substitution of the homosexual act to follow. Gawain, chivalrous and courtly apotheosis of masculinity, is placed in a precarious situation where his well known heterosexual proclivities and desire would actually allow not only the forbidden potential of the male body to be penetrated but also the unacceptable possibility of heterosexual activity—and courtly love—as having a perverse *Gründrisse* (Marchello-Nizia, 'Amour Mariage, Parenté,' 969–82).

There is a larger issue here, however, into which these concerns play. Such perverse implications are constructed as threatening not just to heterosexual behavior and desire but to homosocial relations and heteronormative interpretive practices as well. Drawing on D. A. Miller's discussion of 'Anal Rope,' we might say that the bedroom scenes produce for the rest of the

poem a queer *connotation* that endangers the text's otherwise normative *denotation* (Miller, 'Anal Rope,' 119–41). Gawain's predicament sets up a complex chain of associations and parallel structures which, originating in the bedroom scenes' juxtaposition to Bertilak's hunts, suggest an increasingly explicit sexualization of male homosociality and aggression. Each time the young knight is confronted with the possibility of sexual intercourse, this very possibility is textually imagined through recourse to male/male affairs. Since the text justifies his first resistance by noting the 'dunte þat shulde hym deue' [the blow that must strike him] (l. 1286), Gawain's opportunity for sexual intercourse (typically represented in medieval texts such as the *Romance of the Rose* and the fabliaux as striking blows or battering the passive recipient) is displaced by thoughts of receiving blows from the Green Knight (ll. 1283–87).²² And, if we recall the narrative voice in the third temptation scene, Gawain's inner struggle is finally settled by his reluctance to sin and to 'be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aȝt.' In both these tests, the external world of masculine activity—the fight with the Green Knight, Gawain's desire not to betray Bertilak, and the patriarchal authority of the church—effectively controls his private behavior and substitutes structurally for the sexual climax inherent in each scene. And when considered through the rhetoric of the second scene, where Gawain's courtly conversations with the Lady and his verbal attempt to dodge her advances depict a martial situation ('he defended hym so fayr þat no fault semed' [he defended himself so well that he seemed faultless] [l.1551]), Fitt III strongly hints that it is both through and against the various discourses of male/male exchange that the bedroom scenes are best understood (Stokes, 'Fitt III as Debate').

By framing Gawain's sodomitical misadventures within the hunting scenes, these discursive shifts begin to connote homosociality as displaced homosexual desire. For nest(l)ed within these scenes of the outside (and hence masculine, non-domestic sphere) both the homo- and the heterosexual implications of the bedroom are read within and produced through the field of masculine affairs, relations, and desires. And if these hunting scenes have a structural (possibly even thematic or symbolic) relationship to the bedroom hunt, as is generally held, then it is equally true that Gawain's bedroom peril has a similar relationship to them. The intertextual effects of juxtaposition are not unidirectional: we can 'read out' as easily as we 'read in' since each scene mutually (re)interprets the other.²³

Each time the Lady stalks Gawain in the bedchamber, Bertilak hunts an animal more difficult than the last: a hart, a boar, and a fox.²⁴ Considered through the lens of the boudoir, this hunt is erotically charged. At

approximately each point corresponding to Gawain's tracking of the homosocial into the highly (hetero)sexual, Bertilak's own pursuits involve the slaying of an animal, a slaying that loosely correlates to Gawain's predicament. After the hart's disembowelment, the emphatic bob comprising lines 1348–52 describes the splitting of the animal's crotch as part of its dismemberment; Bertilak deals the boar a death blow by finding his 'slot' ['slot' and 'hollow at the base of the throat'] (l. 1593) and ramming his sword there up to the hilt; and the skinning of the wilely fox brilliantly foreshadows Gawain's own figurative 'skinning' of the girdle at the Green Chapel (a skinning which, by taking place on Circumcision Day, powerfully connotes castration²⁵). In other words, just as sexual intercourse for the hunted Gawain would lead to his own penetration (and symbolic castration or 'death' as a masculine subject), Bertilak's hunting leads to an analogous sexualized death for the beasts. This situation engenders a dangerous proposition: since the Lady's sexual hunt for Gawain is actually Bertilak's homosocial hunt to entrap him, and since Bertilak's homosocial hunt carries sexual traces from its relationship to the Lady's temptation, then Bertilak's masculine world of homosociality, violence, and aggression—all types of masculine exchange—discloses traces of (homo)sexual desire.

Further, when read through the lens of Fitt III, other aspects of male/male interaction also connote homosexual desire as well. The exchange of blows, first at Arthur's castle (full of 'stif' men who in a savage act of bonding kick the Green Knight's decapitated/castrated head among themselves) and later at the Green Chapel between Gawain and the Green Knight become (homo)erotically charged.²⁶ The detailed description of the two men, taking on dominant/submissive or active/passive positions as they take turns exchanging blows on Circumcision Day symbolically places the receiver, though denoted as hypermasculine, in a feminized position. And the description of the exchange—such as 'stifly strike a strok for anoper' [stifly strike one stroke for another] (l. 287) or 'þis dint þat þou schal dryue' [this blow that you shall strike] (l. 389)—shares a rhetoric remarkably similar to such (hetero)sexual allegories of penetration as the *Romance of the Rose*. Even the poem's prominent description of axes invites such a reading. As they are gripped in hand to strike submissive flesh, the weapons' phallic quality is made clear in an almost Spenserian fashion. Consider, for example, the Green Knight's massive weapon. Imperiously riding into Arthur's presence, the 'aghlich mayster' holds in one hand a holly bob

And an ax in his oper, a hoge and vnmete,
A spetos sparþe to expoun in spelle quoso myȝt.

Pe hede of an eln erde þe large lenkþe hade,
 Pe grayn al of grene stele and of golde hewen
 Pe bit burnyst bryȝt, with a brod egge
 As well schapen to schere as scharp rasores.
 Pe stele of a stif staf þe sturne hit bi grypte,
 Pat watz wounden wyth yrn to þe wandez ende
 And al bigrauen with grene in gracios werkes;
 A lace lapped aboute þat louked at þe hede
 and so after þe halme halched ful ofte,
 Wyth tryed tasselez þerto tacched innoghe
 On botounz of þe bryȝt grene brayden ful ryche. (ll. 208–220)

[And an axe in the other, huge and monstrous / a cruel weapon for anyone to describe. / The head had the large length of an ellrod, / The blade all of green steel and hammered gold / The bit polished bright, with a broad edge / As well shaped to cut as a sharp razor. / The stern man gripped it by the handle, a stiff staff / That was wound with iron to the shaft's end / and begraven with pleasant green designs; / A lace wrapped around it that fastened at the head / And was often wrapped around the handle, / With enough choice tassels attached thereto / On buttons of bright green, richly embroidered.]

A large stiff shaft (supporting a massive deadly head to which a foreskin-like lace is attached) carried erect in his hand as a symbol of power and challenge to the men of Arthur's court, the axe's symbolization as phallus replaces that of the penis much as a violent exchange of blows replaces more explicit homosexual contact. In a similar manner, the erotic subtext of chivalric violence (and games, as this particular version of aggression is called) surfaces in the male struggles for power and domination over men. Such sexuality is particularly inscribed in the Green Knight's gaze and in his reference to the Arthurian court as 'berdlez chylder' (l. 280), the stage at which medieval Latin homoerotic verse most typically describes boys as objects, and frequently willing ones, of homosexual advances. If the implied threat of sodomy suggests a new way of reading these events, it is a disruptively queer one, for issues of power, gender, and sexuality become richly interchangeable—and reinterpretable. *Sir Gawain* becomes a remarkable poem in which a subtext of homosexual behavior has produced a supertext of homosexual desire.

But in a powerful move which both rejects homosexual activity and denies queer connotation Gawain 'just says no' to the Lady. Despite the severe consequences of her sexual attempts, his predicament, while illustrating a sodomitical danger, does not disrupt heteronormative identity and sexuality. Rather it secures them by privileging denotation over connotation. By refuting the latter's validity, the poem homophobically raises the issue of queer desire

just enough to silence it—and to reinforce that silence (Miller, 'Anal Rope,' 124–25). That is, by setting up a potentially queer situation and then rejecting it, *Sir Gawain* ultimately frees both heterosexual activity and homosocial relations from perversity by relegating sodomy and homosexual desire to the realm of a transgressive Other.

On the most basic textual level, however, this disarming move functions through privileging explicit male homosocial bonds over implicit homosexual ones. As Sheila Fisher has noted,

The poem raises this possibility [of sodomy] and then swerves in order to forefront not the homosexual, but rather the homosocial, and within the poem, life-giving and life-assuring bonds of feudal chivalry. (Fisher, 'Taken Men,' 86)

For Fisher, the 'veiled possibility of a homosexual act' serves a positive dominant function as it 'suggests the intensity of these homosocial bonds' between Gawain and Bertilak. The undercurrent of sodomy in the bedroom scene functions as social control: to ensure that Gawain will reject the advances and traffick 'in the Lady and not with her,' a trafficking that will 'enact and construct the economies of feudalism.' Hence, the rejection of homosexual activity consolidates, even valorizes, the homosociality underwriting the poem's marginalization and tokenization of women as objects, *pace* Gayle Ruben, to be trafficked among men.

While Fisher's overall analysis is sound, it fails to grasp the full import of this valorizing 'swerve' from a homosexual to a homosocial valence, for such a swerve is a subtle but wide-ranging *homophobic* move. If Gawain's refusal of the Lady's advances signals a rejection of adultery and disloyalty, then it also denotes an implicit repudiation of both homosexual activity and its potential mediation through heterosexual and homosocial practices. Further, much like the accusation of sodomy in *Eneas*, the threat of sodomy functions as a clever controlling device, supplying a justification for Gawain's chastity. Trifling factors such as adultery, disloyalty, and fear of death have characteristically hindered him little elsewhere in such situations (Whiting, 'Gawain: His Reputation'). But, as a perfect knight and paragon of medieval heterosexual masculinity, adultery becomes less probable under these circumstances and would explain why he risks losing his coveted heterosexual reputation rather than, as we have seen, his masculine identification itself: 'pou art not Gawan' the Lady frequently taunts to overcome his resistance to her advances, and he has to agree (Patterson, *Subject of History*, 11). The equation that emerges in the temptation scene—active heterosexual sex = passive homosexual activity = loss of the masculine self—implicitly transforms sodomy and the penetrated

male into a figurative death-threat (loss of self) and transforms the implicit threat of homosexual activity into yet another powerful trope of social control.

Hence, through the play of denotation and connotation, the unnatural vice moves from figure to open secret: subtly raised but never explicitly mentioned, the rejected threat of sodomy regulates the boundaries of proper/improper behavior and effectively, if unspokenly, polices Gawain's behavior. And the reader's as well, for the poem assumes—and reinforces—an understanding and acceptance of homosexual conduct as proscribed behavior for its textual logic to work. And this logic prescribes 'naturalization' of the male body as heteronormatively positioned, male sexuality as active heterosexual (not passive homosexual) practices, and masculine identity and desires as bound up within these norms. Through momentarily conflating heterosexual and homosexual activity, *Sir Gawain's* dominant sexual politics posits them as oppositional categories—Acceptable/Normal/Same versus Unacceptable/Transgressive/Other—to prevent the twain from ever meeting again. Gawain's rejection ensures that both masculine identity and heterosexual positionality exclude any perverse contamination. From such a perspective, I require little recourse to Freud to note that the overt humor in these scenes is a defense mechanism both disarming and controlling sodomy's potential threat.

THE GIRDLE, GYNOCRACY, AND MISOGYNISTIC CONTAINMENT

It is through the much discussed girdle, however, that *Sir Gawain* recuperates homosocial relations from the sexual realm. Faced with Lady Bertilak's advances, Gawain is in a bind. His courtesy, part of his masculine and chivalric identity and reputation, can not permit him to denounce the Lady completely, yet accepting her offer would constitute adultery and perversity. The girdle she offers him in lieu of her body provides Gawain with an 'out,' allowing him to avoid potential homosexual activity. And since the girdle was represented as powerful enough to overcome the blows of the Green Knight, it could preserve Gawain's life: anyone wearing the garment during a fight 'myȝt not be slayn for slyȝt vpon erþe' (might not be slain by any means on earth) (l. 1854).²⁷ Under these circumstances, that Gawain accepts the garment and then withholds it from the exchange ritual with Bertilak is not surprising. But the girdle is a trap: by taking this garment, Gawain privileges it over his shield; by concealing it from Bertilak, he dishonors his host; by not confessing his deceit, he sins.²⁸ In fact, as Gawain later discovers after his encounter at the Green Chapel, both the intended outcome with the Green Knight (now

revealed as Bertilak) and the beheading challenge depend on his accepting the 'lace.'

But like the temptation itself, the lace also threatens to pervert chivalry through connotation—despite the poem's earlier rejection of such an interpretation. Both withholding the lace from Bertilak and wearing it at the Green Chapel confrontation connote yet another homosexualization of masculine identity and culture. Feminized—the girdle is wrapped around his waist—Gawain must kneel before the Green Knight and accept a blow from his massive weapon.²⁹ As the climax to the earlier exchange-of-blows game (also on Circumcision Day), the image of the Green Knight's large axe coming down on the submissive and girdled Gawain and creating a gash-like wound from which blood flows suggests both a loss of maidenhead and a figurative castration threat (Heng, 'Feminine Knots,' 505–06.) Girdle and wound become signs connecting Gawain's faults specifically to the feminine—and to his feminization—and serve as reminder of the loss of masculinity that such feminine positioning can incur. After Gawain's deceit is revealed, he flings the girdle to the Green Knight and laments:

Lo! þer þe falssyng—foule mot hit falle!
 For care of þy knobbe, cowardyse me taȝt
 To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake:
 Þat is larges and lewté, þat longez to knyȝtez.
 Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer
 Of trecherye and vntrawþe—boþe bityde sorȝe
 And care! (ll.2378–84)

[Lo! There the breaking of faith—may evil befall it! / Concern over your blow taught me cowardice / To associate myself with covetise, to forsake my nature: / That is largess and fidelity, which belongs to knights. / Now I am faulty and false, and have been ever afraid / of treachery and untruth—may it befall them both sorrow / And care!]

Having donned the girdle, Gawain has adopted a group of faults typically associated with women, who frequently represent lack in such medieval discourse, and has forsaken his 'kynde' (also, one cannot avoid thinking of the medieval phrase describing sodomy: 'to act against kind'; see Heng, 'Feminine Knots,' 507). Despite his manly appearance as he leaves Bertilak's court, he has also forsaken his masculinity and has willingly adopted an overt passive position in order to save his life and to reenter the masculine sociosymbolic order.

But, much as with the implications of the bedroom scene, this specter of queer connotation is ultimately used both to deny vigorously the implication

of homosexual desire as inherent within masculine culture itself and to restate the primacy of normative denotation. For such a perverse misreading of the events testing Gawain and compromising the chivalry on which the Arthurian court is based does not originate in the Green Knight/Bertilak (or even in the Lady through whom he acts) but rather in Morgan le Fay. The resolution of the Green Chapel scene revolves around a fantastic circulation of agency: blame shifts from Gawain to Bertilak to the Lady and precipitates Gawain's antifeminist diatribe, including 'hit is no ferly þaȝ a fole madde / And þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe' (it is not unusual if [a man is] made into a fool / And through the wiles of women be brought to sorrow) (ll. 2414–15). Finally, from the Lady the blame shifts to Morgan herself.³⁰ Gawain accepts responsibility for his faults when confessing his adventures in Arthur's court, but, as he leaves the Green Chapel, the blame for his shortcomings (and the tendency to read chivalry as 'faulty') are posited as a direct result of Morgan's *manipulative* test. This shift is a crucial one in the poem's sexual politics: through it, the patriarchal order usefully employs the relationship between homophobia and misogyny to assure its continued control over the medieval cultural scene by displacing homosexual desire.³¹ Hence, the misogynistic attribution of sodomy as originating in women, an attribution apparently running at cross-currents with courtly love and the adoration of women in the Middle Ages,³² is not an artistic flaw but rather usefully modulates homosexual connotation, allowing yet controlling it by retaining the primacy of homosocial relations 'made safe': hence Morgan as *fons et origo*. Further, Sir Gawain's shift of agency to Morgan is a self-protecting mechanism that further marshalls the text's sodomitical connotations—*by emphasizing the subversion*—back into the service of the heternormative itself. For similar reasons, the fulsome character Dick Cheese in *Night of the Queerwolf* blames his friend's homosexual panic on the latter's fiancée: 'She's got you questioning your manhood. Only a woman could do that.' Woman is the Great Erroneous Connotator and willfully misinterprets (witness the Wife of Bath); therefore she must be controlled so that masculine culture's privileged reading of itself remains unchallenged (and, as I shall argue later, necessarily unexplored).

I can best illustrate my point, and the subtle relationship between connotation and misreading, by examining Morgan's role in some detail and then reading it through other medieval texts. Disclosing Morgan's agency, the Green Knight/Bertilak asserts that

Þurȝ myȝt of Morgne la Faye, þat in my hous lenges,
And koyntyse of clergie, bi craftes wel lerned—
Þe maystrès of Merlyn mony ho hatz taken,

For ho hatz dalt drwry ful dere sumtyme
 With þat conable klerk; þat knowes alle your knyȝtez
 At hame.
 Morgne ȝe goddes
 þerfore hit is hir name;
 Weldez non so hyȝe hawtesse
 þat ho ne con make ful tame—
 Ho wayned me vpon þis wyse to your wynne halle
 For to assay þe surquidré of þe Rounde Table:
 Ho wayned me þis wonder your wyttez to reue,
 for to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dyȝe
 With glopnyng of þat ilke gome þat gostlych speked
 With his hede in his honde bfore þe hyȝe table. (ll.2446–2462)

[Through the might of Morgan le Fay, who dwells in my house, / And [through] the skill of magical knowledge, according to well learned crafts—/ Many of Merlin's powers she has taken, / For she had intimate love-relations / With that learned clerk. That is well known by all your knights / At home. / Morgan the goddess / Therefore is her name;/ None wields such high pride [haughtiness] / That she cannot tame [humble] them. She sent me in this way to your delightful hall / To test the pride of the Round Table: / She sent me, this wonder, to take away your wits, / To distress Guinevere and cause her to die / From the shock [terror] of that man who speaks supernaturally / With his head in his hand before the high table.]

Morgan, through her sexual wiles and acquired magical skills, has taken the secrets of control from men. Not playing by their rules, she cannot be ruled by them: untamable, she can tame everyone else; ungovernable, she can make perverse the practices governing their lives. By having her test the Round Table and provoke Gawain's crisis through her desire to frighten Guinevere, she creates a new, negative interpretation of Arthurian chivalry and exploits it at the expense of a more traditional, affirmative reading. After all, her desire was for Bertilak to 'assay þe surquidré, if hit soth were / þat renes of grete renoun of þe Rounde Table' (to assay the pride, [to assay] if it were true / [the] current [rumor] of the Round Table's great renown) (ll. 2457–58) and, ultimately, we can assume, to debunk this 'renoun' as myth.

In conjunction with her interpretative desires, the textual representation of this 'auncian lady' (2463) places her in a position outside the homosocial patriarchy and also misogynynistically proposes that, existing behind and ultimately controlling the masculine order, there is a gynocracy in which masculine culture can be reinterpreted and males can be playthings trafficked among women to work out their feminine jealousies, hatreds, and other negative desires (Heng, 'Feminine Knots,' 511–12). Most importantly, if Morgan is in fact ultimately responsible for Gawain's tests, then the sodomitical subtext

of the bedroom temptation scenes and the gift of the girdle ultimately derive from Morgan's scheme.³³ I do not find this implicit relationship between sodomy and misogyny at all surprising. After all, this is not the first time in medieval literature that a woman has used a girdle to place a man in a sodomitical position and subsequently to humiliate him: an analogous thematic relationship, though structured differently, also appears to some extent in the Middle High German poem *Der Borte*.³⁴

Nor is woman's reading of masculine culture as queer—as a way to control, entrap, or confound men—an uncommon one in misogynistic discourse. I think that *Sir Gawain* subtly participates in this textual network and seeks to reinforce the control of women by displacing the origins (and false accusations) of male homosexual activity onto a feminine Other. In Marie de France's *Lanval*, for example, when Lanval rejects Guinevere's sexual advances, the Queen willfully misinterprets his relationship to male retinue, produces a queer connotation through innocent, 'obvious' denotation:

'Lanval,' fet ele, 'bien le quit,
Vux n'amez guaires cel deduit!
Asez le m'a hum dit sovent
Que de femme n'avez talent!
Vaslez avez bien afeitiez,
Ensemble od eus vus deduiez.
Vileins cuarz, mauveis failliz,
Mult est mis sire malbailliz,
Ki pres de lui vus ad suffert,
Mun escient que Deu in pert.

[Lanval, I well believe that you do not like this kind of pleasure [heterosexual intercourse]. I have been told often enough that you have no desire for women. You have well-trained young men and enjoy yourself with them. Base coward, wicked recreant, my lord is extremely unfortunate to have suffered you near him. I think he may have lost his salvation because of it.]³⁵

This accusation, sexualizing Lanval's homosocial relationship with his retinue, is, of course, untrue and functions as Guinevere's means of controlling him and avenging her rejection. Nonetheless, the queen's lie precipitates Lanval's temporary downfall. He is so distressed that, in order to deny that homosexual practice and desire subtends masculine social relations, he discloses the existence of the female lover, a lover who has sworn him to secrecy.

And in *Eneas*, Lavinia's mother uses her false reading of hero as sodomite in order to prevent his marriage with her daughter:

Fille, molt as lo sens perdu,

quant de tel home a fait ton dru
 qui ja de toi ne avra cure
 et qui se fet contre nature,
 les homes prent, les fames let,
 la natural cople desfait.
 Garde nel me dies ja mes;
 ceste amistié voil que tu les,
 del sodomite, del coart.
 (ll. 8603–11)

[Daughter, you have completely lost your senses, since you have taken as your love such a man, who will never have a care for you, and who acts so against nature that he takes men and leaves women, undoing the natural union. Take care that you never speak to me of him again. I wish you to give up the love of this sodomite wretch.] (227)

The mother's accusation is so powerful that Lavinia believes it momentarily, for when Eneas does not come to look at her as she stands in the tower window, she reads these signs as connoting homosexual desire, a desire the text expels from the realm of normative sexual behavior.

On a larger level, of course, the effect of these false criminations hinge on a tacit understanding of sodomy and homosexual desire as transgressive (but here untrue). Both *Lanval* and *Eneas* subsequently invoke these charges as part of a larger scheme misogynistically illustrating why women cannot be trusted—and must themselves be exposed, as they eventually are in both poems. The texts thus serve a positive hegemonic function: the control of sexual dissidence and the justification of misogyny become mutually reinforcing. The threat of sodomy to the male imaginary is effectively, and easily, displaced onto a feminine Other.

Having pushed Gawain far beyond his limits, Morgan has evoked a crisis of masculinity both in the knight and in Arthurian chivalry. The text plays on this crisis by producing the fear that patriarchal control of the social order can be subtended, even manipulated, by female desires and that man—supposedly the active controller—might simply be a passive facilitator of woman's will. By retrospectively revealing Morgan le Fay's centrality in Gawain's plight, *Sir Gawain's* project is also one of displacement, revealing that sodomy, both as controlling threat and (potential) practice, does not originate in the masculine subject himself—nor in the proper reader, who has simply been misled by the queer connotations deriving from Morgan's plan. Mary's potentiation of the shield furthers the values it symbolizes; Lady Bertilak's manipulation with the girdle, underwritten by Morgan's control of Bertilak, disrupts them. What else, after all, is Bertilak if not controlled? Despite his untrue assertion of

agency, he does Morgan's dirty-work, and, as his beaver-colored beard symbolically suggests, is a metaphorical castrate.³⁶

Since Morgan, then, ultimately bears responsibility for the exchange-of-blows agreement and its later workings (i.e. the homosexualization of homosocial exchange) her appearance recursively supports the Same/Other binary that Gawain's rejection of sodomy set up, though this time to patriarchy's greater advantage. That Gawain and Bertilak 'acolen and kysen' (l. 2471) immediately after these disturbing revelations reassertively denote an affirmation of homosocial bonds free of woman's homosexualization of them, and Gawain's departure from the Green Chapel's vaginal geography symbolizes the aggressive expulsion of feminine influences from himself.³⁷ And, later, Arthur's final move to redeploy the meaning of the girdle as a sign of homosocial triumph reauthorizes the masculine interpretive mode, free of queer connotation, as dominant.

It is within this antifeminist move that I believe we can also locate the poem's attempt to displace the contemporary problematics of chivalry onto outside forces. Arthur, as his courtier-knights imply in their murmurings (ll. 674–83), is certainly at fault in the poem's first six hundred (or so) lines for allowing Gawain eventually to lose his life over a silly challenge (certainly late medieval chivalry had more than enough of these).³⁸ But the text's invocation of Morgan's magic and her abilities to wield power over and to reinterpret the most proud individual, makes clear that anyone, even the most noble and chivalric ruler Arthur, could be manipulated by her. If the noble order of chivalry is in disrepair, perhaps it is not through an internal instability but rather through an uncontrollable misreading imposed from the outside. This threat, Woman, not only pollutes homosocial bonding but threatens to destroy the force originally intended to unite the male aristocracy.³⁹ As Sheila Fisher states, 'Once the poem has demonstrated that women constitute a threat to the chivalric code that is simultaneously sexual, political, and economic [i.e. controlling exchanges], it attempts to erase that threat by reasserting the values of Christian chivalry and of feudalism and by marginalizing Morgan' (Fisher, 'Taken Men,' 72).⁴⁰ In other words, the poem's misogyny is a profoundly consolidating (and rehabilitative) act. To Fisher's words, I would only add that sodomy becomes a trope which, by signifying the worst of all sins and sexual practices, exemplifies an extremely efficient way for woman's threat to chivalry to be represented and creates a viable Other against which the aristocratic masculine order could contend.⁴¹

Sir Gawain's displacement of sodomy and homosexual desire thus produces a nexus of interpretation, power, and the queerness which functions much in

the same manner that Laura Kendrick's brilliant analysis of antifeminist texts attributes to misogynystic discourse. In an attempt to understand the complex workings of such diatribes, Kendrick comes to the following conclusions:

Verbal (or physical) repression of (or aggression against) woman may be a pleasurable release, but it is seldom recognized as such by the oppressors, who see themselves instead as virtuous protectors of an endangered masculine society and of its and their own inner purity. The discharge of aggressive impulses is thus masked as the enforcement of order, as a quelling, not a release, of dangerous excesses, located, not in the self or the society, but in woman as Other. . . . Aggressive expulsion of the disorderly other is potentially dangerous energy turned to good, sublimated, regulated by serving the explicit service of regulation, pointed away from the center, from male peers. (Kendrick, 'Transgression, Contamination, and Woman,' 218)

Found in literary, historical, theological, and moral writings, this fear and hatred of woman as dangerous Other, Kendrick goes on to demonstrate, has a direct relationship to man's relationship to the female body and to his own:

The only way for a man to redeem himself from the degradation of being expelled from the female body at birth is to expel the female from his own body, and the only way he can do this is symbolically, as through verbal invective against or degradation of woman, or through laws preventing women from participating in the masculine social body. (Kendrick, 221)

Kendrick further develops her argument by illustrating that such expulsion serves an important need in a patriarchal culture: to cleanse man of his contact with woman, of the idea that he came out of her and might be understood as contaminated with her filth (Kendrick, 221).

But *Sir Gawain* demonstrates that the need for expulsion goes even further in a homophobic culture and serves to protect man against the idea that he can be like her sexually, i.e. used by other men. The literal implications of the bedroom scene reveal the potential for the male body to be feminized, invaded, disempowered, or made sexually submissive. By representing these possibilities as a function of the Other, and concealing that they might be inherent in the Same (men certainly *can* be penetrated but *must not be* in order to remain masculine), the poem explicitly uses misogyny to expel any such potential that the social order might have. Gawain's vituperation, and the poem itself, is an aggressive act to consolidate masculine culture, its territorialization of a potentially feminized male body, and its self-interpretation—all of this to protect the patriarchal body (both individual and social) from being penetrated. The feminine Other's power must be contained, for that power is dangerously queer.

QUEER DENIAL AND THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

I am struck by this move to deny so vigorously queer misreading and desire, to construe the threat of sodomy as a function of the Other, and to preclude feminine misreading (and connotative power) from feminizing. It is true that medieval homophobia was rampant, and had reached its most vitriolic stage, in the late fourteenth century. But why does such vitriol seek to protect—and need to protest the innocence of—chivalric subject positions as heteronormative, to gainsay transgressive ones? And why must the queer, even if strategically displaced for misogynistic ends, be constructed so as to be denied? Perhaps one answer lies in the concept of *Reaktionsbildung*, reaction-formation: an ‘attitude or habitus diametrically opposed to a repressed wish, and constituted as a reaction against it... the countercahexis of a conscious element; equal in strength to the unconscious cathexis, it works in the contrary direction’ (Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-analysis*, 376). In other words, perhaps heteronormative medieval culture—chivalry in particular—denies a homosexual *Gründrisse* because that homosexual desire is fundamental to its very functioning. Perhaps homophobia occludes yet discloses that the queer is unwittingly expressed through disavowal.

I can best explore this reaction-formation and its implications first through recourse to psychoanalytic theory and medieval Arthurian texts and, then, through a further look at Dollimore’s (de)construction of Same/Other paradigms. In western culture, as early psychoanalysts such as Freud and Sándor Ferenczi point out, those desires in the child which will later be labelled homosexual and which are repressed in the formation of a heteronormative subject do not disappear but rather are censored only to return in sublimated or displaced form. While Freud discussed various masculine institutions in this manner, Ferenczi’s work is particularly insightful. In ‘The Nosology of Male Homosexuality (Homo-erotism),’ he argues that many of the activities that we categorize as male homosociality are in fact sublimated homosexual desire. And since periodically this sublimation is not sufficient to ‘rid’ a subject of forbidden desire, a reaction-formation against it arises which not only precludes tender same-sex affection but also subtends male aggression:

It is in fact astounding to what an extent present-day men have lost the capacity for mutual affection and amiability. Instead there prevails among men decided asperity, resistance, and love of disputation. Since it is unthinkable that those tender affects which were so strongly pronounced in childhood could have disappeared without leaving a trace, one has to regard these signs of resistance as reaction-formations, as defence symptoms erected against affection for the same sex. I would even go so far as to regard the barbarous duels of the German

students as similarly distorted proofs of affection towards members of their own sex. (Ferenczi, 'Nosology of Male Homosexuality,' 315)

In a homophobic culture, even *sublimated* forms of homosexual desire are sometimes repressed and defense mechanisms produced to protect against this desire becoming explicit: that is, to provide a protected outlet. This, as modern theory has also argued, is the root of homophobia as well.⁴²

Ferenczi further speculates that the medieval phenomena of chivalry and courtly love, where a man enslaves himself to a woman, are also a reaction-formation against male/male sexual desire. Therefore, he argues, chivalry and courtly love are at heart homosexual:

A part of the unsatisfied homo-erotism remains 'free-floating,' and demands to be appeased; since this is impossible under the conditions of present-day civilisation, this quantity of sexual hunger has to undergo a displacement, namely on to the feeling-relationship to the opposite sex. I quite seriously believe that the men of today are one and all obsessively heterosexual as the result of this affective displacement; in order to free themselves from men, they become the slaves of women. This may be the explanation of the 'chivalry' and the exaggerated, often visibly affected, adoration of woman that has dominated the male world since the middle ages... (Ferenczi, 'Nosology of Male Homosexuality,' 315-316)

It is in such an overall cultural formation where homosexual desire undergoes both sublimation and, periodically, displacement that a reaction-formation preventing (yet simultaneously allowing) its demystification occurs. I do not contend that the tendency to reaction formation was quite as strong (though aggressively and homophobically there) in the fourteenth century as in the twentieth. Many forms of male/male affection were more accepted and the boundary between friendship and eroticism less marked, though clearly extant (Boswell, *Christianity*, 133-35 and 188-94; and Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*, xviii-xx). But I do think that the relationship between homosocial relations and the homosexual ones posited by psychoanalysis is a valid one for medieval culture—especially in the way that medieval Arthurian chivalric romances sexualize fighting *in order to desexualize it* and to deny (and hence discourage) homosexual desire between men.

Two examples will clarify this largely unconscious project and make more apparent the significance of *Sir Gawain's* homophobic constructions as reaction-formation. In Hartmann von Aue's translation/adaptation of Chrétien de Troye's *Erec et Enide*, the martial aspects of the chivalric life are inscribed in the sexual discourse of marital consummation.⁴³ By making explicit that a heterosexual *metaphor* is being employed—and that it should be understood

in this manner—any subversive sexual reading of male interaction is subtly, and implicitly, denied (though provocatively revealed through this interpretive foreclosure). Describing a fight between Erec and another knight, Hartmann states:

hie wart diu sperweide
vor dem lîbe durch gesant
durch beide schilte unz an die hant.
die starken schefte ganz beliben,
swie sêre si wûîrden dar getriben.
wider zûgan si diu sper
in manlicher ger
und riten von ein ander dan,
die zwêne gelîch gemuote man,
durch tjosieren mêre.
diu ros wurden aber sêre
und vaste mit den sporn geman
und wider zesamene gesant.
hie huop sich herzemîne
nâch starkem gewinne.
si minneten sunder bette:
diu minne stuont ze wette,
sweder nider gelîge,
dem wart der tût wâge.
mit scheften si sich kusten
durch schilte zuo den brusten
mit selher minnekrefte
daz die esch nen schefte
kleine unz an die hant zekluben
und daz die spiltern ûfe stuben. (ll. 9093–9117)

[The spears passed through the shields and went in as far as the hand. The strong shafts remained whole, however forcefully they had been driven. They pulled out their lances again with manly eagerness and rode away from each other, the two like-minded men, both intending to joust again. The horses were again spurred roughly and firmly, and driven together a second time. Here began a love affair for a great prize. They needed no bed to make love. The goal of their love was such that whoever lay down would be rewarded with death. They kissed one another on the breast with their lances through the shields with such passion that the oaken shafts splintered right down to the hand so that the chips flew like dust. (The translation is Keller's, 126)]

Similarly, Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* employs violence to dispel sexual desire that is potentially homosexual. Having ridden in the forest all day, Sir Lancelot finds a bed within a pavillion, and deciding to stay there for the night, falls asleep on bed. Malory succinctly describes what happens next:

Than within an owre there com that knyght that ought the pavylyon. He wente that his lemman had layne in that bed, and so he leyde hymm adowne by sir Launcelot and toke hym in his armys and began to kysse hym. And whan sir Launcelot felte a rough berde kyssyng hym he sterte oute of the bed lyghtly, and the other knyght after hym. And eythir of hem gate their swerdys in their hondis, and oute at the pavylyon dore wente the knyght of the pavylyon, and sir Lancelot folowed hym. And there by a lytyll slad sir Launcelot wounded hym sore nyghe unto the deth. And than he yelded hym to sir Launcelot, and so he graunted hym, so that he wolde telle hym why he com into the bed. (Malory, *Works*, 153)

However highly sexualized such rhetoric might seem to us, as a rhetorical strategy it actually attempts to delineate sexual and social practices.

Considered through this lens, *Sir Gawain's* apparently normative use of a subversive game threatens to collapse this distinction. The homophobic set-up and subsequent denial of queer connotation instead sets up a new connotative system in which homophobic denial itself signifies perverse desire: normative culture itself as the return of the repressed. Not only masculine identity but the very cultural formation of that identity is implicated as perverse—or, at the very least, posited as transgressive of its own norms. Furthermore, the desire underlying the representation and subsequent condemnation of 'courtly love' between Gawain and the Lady is suggested through denial as grounded in homosexual desire as well.⁴⁴ From our modern perspective, such a realization consequently threatens to desubliminate perverse desire as subtending the cultural economics which Luce Irigaray has termed 'hom(m)osexual'—a patriarchal or male-centered (homme) system of heterosexual exchanges and uses of women as objects to solidify social relations (and sexual desire) among men, a system which uses women as objects into (and through) which male homosexual desire and relations can be effectively mystified and strongly denied (Irigaray, *This Sex*, 170–97). As D.A. Miller points out, 'if connotation, as the dominant signifying practice of homophobia, has the advantage of constructing an essentially insubstantial homosexuality, it has the corresponding inconvenience of tending to raise this ghost all over the place' (Miller, 'Anal Rope,' 125). *Sir Gawain* illustrates that sometimes one invents ghosts in the closet to draw attention from the bogeyman under one's bed.

Since the queer ineluctably returns as an inextricable result of homophobic denial, I want to examine again Gawain's reentry into the 'masculine' sociosymbolic order through the nick, the confession of the girdle, and the homosocial reestablishment at the Green Chapel. While this reentry aggressively dispels any queer connotations, the very acts leading up to denial of (and the redemption from) this queer, disparaged feminine passivity

nonetheless suggests homosexual desire as homosociality's highest (though sublimated) goal. For, much as happens in the *Miller's Tale*, *Sir Gawain's* homosocialization invokes the paternal metaphor.

I use 'paternal metaphor'—that which marks the Oedipal resolution—deliberately. Several critics have argued convincingly that Gawain's relationship to Bertilak and the Lady is an oedipal one in which he is unwittingly *forced* to replay the position of the Child desiring the Mother while identifying with and threatened by the Father: hence the castration threat following the scenes of sexual testing and acceptance of the girdle. But while I agree with such an approach to *Sir Gawain*, it only employs the heterosexual aspect of the complete complex psychoanalysis envisions.⁴⁵ In *The Ego and the Id*, one of Freud's last major theorizations, the complete complex is succinctly described:

Closer study usually discloses the more complete Oedipus complex, which is twofold, positive and negative, and is due to the bisexuality originally present in children: that is to say, a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-choice towards his mother, but at the same time he also behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility towards his mother. . . . It may even be that the ambivalence displayed in the relations to the parents should be attributed entirely to bisexuality... (Freud, *Ego and Id*, 28–29)

In other words, sexual desire not yet channelled into an exclusively hetero- or homo- object choice (what Freud means by 'bisexuality') is simultaneously directed both maternally and paternally. Freud later explains that just as with the simple, or positive, complex, the threat of castration brings about a heteronormative resolution. Homosexual desire is sublimated into 'higher' goals, here the formation of the super-ego itself (29–31).

Since medieval sexology did not deny the ubiquity of sexual desire but simply tried to control its object choice as hetero-, we can easily trace the workings of this complex in *Sir Gawain*. Gawain's simultaneous dual positioning (masculine/feminine, hetero/homo) forces him into a situation remarkably similar to that of the child's complete oedipalization. The unsuspecting knight's carefully contrived relationship with the lord *through* his wife positions him so that the axes of identification with Bertilak and assumed sexual desire for the Lady are enacted along with their obverse (i.e., identification with the Lady and *compelled* sexual desire for the father, both of which feminize). Likewise, the humorous gender reversals of the Lady 'hunting' Gawain and pledging her service to him assigns the knight an identification that is both feminine (the hunted beloved) and masculine (he is to be *her*

lover). And mimicking with some detail the kisses the Lady gives Gawain—'Ho comes nerre with þat and cachez hym in armez, / Loutez luflych adoun and þe leude kyssez' (She comes nearer with that and catches him in her arms / bends down graciously and kisses the knight) (ll. 1305–06)—the ones he subsequently plants upon Bertilak—'He haspez his fayre hals with armez wythinne / And kyssez hym as comlyly as he coupe awyse' (He grasps the fair neck within his arms / And kisses him as fairly [graciously] as he could devise) (ll. 1388–89)—subtly conflate the paternal axes. By giving to Bertilak his highly eroticized winnings, Gawain's exchange, also a homosocial identification, ineluctably carries with it traces of sexual desire.

But if the paternal metaphor in the poem works to resolve this complex—to reinstate Gawain's heteronormative subject position as the proper one and to reinforce the rejection of homosexual practices—it also contradicts masculine culture's definition of itself as *not* queer. For the events characterizing Gawain's recuperation into the patriarchal order reveal that *through sublimation* the negative complex's disruption is queer desire itself! Since the poem sexualizes the Green Knight's fatherly positioning of the filial Gawain, it homosexualizes the entire homosocial (re)production of the heterosexual subject through the threat of castration; and since Gawain has been forced into this position, the Chapel scene suggests that through father/son homosocial relations and Oedipalization itself (Bertilak after all actively attempts to castrate/recuperate Gawain) sublimated homosexual desire can find an outlet without being manifested in an overt sexual form. After all, the text has formulated the literal expression of such desire as equivalent to death or expulsion from the masculine socio-symbolic order. As Irigaray explains in 'Commodities among Themselves':

Consider the exemplary case of *father-son relationships*, which guarantee the transmission of patriarchal power and its laws, its discourse, its social structures. These relations . . . [cannot] openly display the pederastic love in which they are grounded. They cannot be put into practice at all, except in language, without provoking a general crisis, without bringing one sort of symbolic system to an end. (*This Sex*, 193)⁴⁶

From this perspective, *Sir Gawain*, both in content and as social text, is a poignantly (de)mystifying poem, marking that those very cultural situations it valorizes as normalizing are based on transgressive desire. Perhaps connotation and denotation are signifying practices even less inseparable than D.A. Miller might allow.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight thus uses sodomy in part to construct a Same/Other binarism intrinsic to the formation of the medieval (and modern)

imaginary. Here, however, such binarism actually destabilizes the Same. First, by constructing the Other as a way of consolidating the Same, the Other becomes necessary to the Same's construction and is thus *proximate* to it (though not consciously acknowledged as such) and, hence, not really the Other. Second, through this proximity, this repressed connection between Same and Other, those very consolidating activities comprising the Same (again, martial behavior and homosociality) are constructed as partially dependent upon, and derived from, that very element banished to the realm of the Other: in *Sir Gawain's* case, homosexual desire.

While developing the idea of the 'perverse dynamic' in *Sexual Dissidence*, Jonathan Dollimore terms this process of proximatization 'transgressive reinscription.' Discussing the relationship of Same, Other, and proximate, Dollimore theorizes that

...the proximate is often constructed as the other, and in a process which facilitates displacement. But the proximate is also what enables a tracking-back of the "other" into the "same". I call this transgressive reinscription, which, also provisionally, may be regarded as the return of the repressed and/or the suppressed and/or the displaced via the proximate. (Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 33)

For *Sir Gawain's* sexual and cultural politics, I would say the following: to justify misogyny, sodomy is constructed as the Other in order to mystify the homosexual desire underwriting homosociality. It is because chivalry is based on (transgressive) homosexual desire that such desire is always already, but can never actually be, suppressed. Certainly such a mystification is not a conscious one, and its implications are necessarily unseen as a part of the Same. This is the power of the queer, to disrupt the Same in more ways than the latter can ever perceive.

This transgressive reinscription of the queer (and feminine) Other into the Same is played out decidedly in the court's laughing appropriation of the girdle, which shifts from a sign of figurative sodomy and disgraceful fall to one of homosocial strength and bonding. Gawain has explained its negative significance to Arthur and the court while connecting it to the castrating wound he received:

'Lo! lorde,' quop þe leude, and þe lace hondeled,
 'þis is þe bende of þis blame I bere in my nek.
 Þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I laȝt haue
 Of couardise and couetyse, þat I haf caȝt þare;
 Þis is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne.
 And I mot nedeȝ hit were wyle I may last;
 For mon may hyden his harme bot vnhap ne may hit,
 For þer hit oneȝ is tachched twynne wil hit neuer.' (ll. 2505–12)

['Lo! lorde,' quod the man, and took hold of the lace / 'this is the band of this blame I bear in my neck. / This is the hurt and the damage that I have gained / Because of cowardice and covetousness, that I caught there; / this is the token of the perfidy in which I have been taken. And I must wear it as long as I may live; / For one may hide his harm but cannot lose it, / For where it is once attached it may not be separated.']

The girdle and the scar—the healed 'vagina' indicating that the male body can be penetrated or castrated⁴⁷—mutually signify each other as tokens of shame, infidelity, deceit, and cowardice (as we have seen, feminizing qualities themselves). Gawain's pledge to wear them transforms him into a reminder of the male's potential loss not only of gendered positionality but also of the phallus.

But, through a semiotic (and gendered) shift, Arthur redeploys the girdle into a token of masculine strength and affection, thus carefully expelling the garment's subversive threat:⁴⁸

þe kyng comfotez þe knyȝt, and alle þe court als
 Laȝen loude þerat and luflyly acorden
 þat lordes and [ledes]⁴⁹ þat longed to þe Table,
 Vche burne of þe broþerhede, a bauderyk schulde haue,
 A bende abelef hym aboute, of a bryȝt grene,
 And þat, for sake of þat segge, in swete to were.
 For þat watz acorded þe renoun of þe Rounde table
 And he honoured þat hit hade, euermore after,
 As hit is breued in þe best boke of romaunce. [ll. 2513–2521]

[The king comforts the knight, and all the court as well / Laugh loudly and graciously agree / That the lords and the men who belong to the Table / Each man of the brotherhood should have a baldric / A bande about him obliquely, of a bright green, / And that [band], for the sake of that man [Gawain], to wear following suite. / For that was accorded to be the renown of the Round Table / And he who had it was honored, evermore after / As it is written in the best book of romance.]

While the laughing redeployment of the girdle from token of feminizing shame and lack to one of homosocial triumph might seem a peculiar move, it is nonetheless a powerful one. Disarmed through laughter and assigned another signified, the Lady's gift becomes a sign illustrating the power of a homosocial hegemony to recuperate—and use to its advancement—those very threats to its existence. The sign of the phallus's loss becomes in effect a sign of its permanent ownership by a masculinist heteronormative order, and the donning of the girdle by all the male members of the Table Round consolidates homosocial bonding as founded on such phallic possession. This symbolic recuperation of the phallus, enacted through both the establishment of a

homosocial order and the writing of romance, functions to comfort Gawain, to relieve him of his loss. Significantly, laughter denies the significance of the girdle and the wound upon which the fallen knight has insisted. He who controls the meaning of signs ultimately controls power and its construction of the human subject. Hence, the laughter accompanying this reassignment seems dismissive, disarming of the danger to itself Gawain has experienced; medieval patriarchy and chivalry as theoretical formulations represent themselves as impenetrable. Apparently, the Other's threat is triumphantly appropriated for the consolidation of (while simultaneously dismissed as separate from) the Same.

Perhaps, though, I should say (im)penetrable. Despite this semiotic shift, the girdle always already connotes queer desire and the possibility that the male can be castrated and penetrated like a woman. The adoption of the girdle as a mark of a homosocial Brotherhood signifies that queer connotation will, through its very denial, always reveal that desire which is occluded by normative masculine denotation.⁵⁰ If the Same is used to consolidate the Other, then the Same depends on it for such consolidation to occur. Further, if, as Dollimore has argued, that which is Other is actually proximate to, and hence a displacement of the Same, the homosexual desire that *Sir Gawain* constructs as a threatening function of the Other displaces the very desire underwriting chivalric homosocial interaction. The great irony—and the normative failure to which the normative will always be blind—of *Sir Gawain* is thus a precise one. If laughter and sign-shifting aggressively conceal a queer truth divulged through concealment, then the Garter Society's move to disarm this revelation is a queer defense mechanism occluding chivalry's homosexual desire. Sometimes a good cigar is not just a good cigar, and the conscious return of the repressed as an act of denial is nonetheless the return of the repressed after all: transgressive reinscription at its best.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

David L. Boyd's articles have appeared in the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, *Essays in Medieval Studies*, *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

NOTES

- 1 I subscribe neither to the still widespread view that *Sir Gawain* is a critique of chivalric ideals nor to the opposing view that, despite the revealed shortcomings and gentle critique of Gawain and the Arthurian court, the poem nonetheless celebrates chivalry. In many ways, the most influential scholars taking these

positions have been, respectively, Moorman, *A Knyght*, 73–75; and Benson *Art and Tradition*, 207–48, esp. 109 and 248. Since other scholarship exploring (or modifying slightly) these positions is vast and would take up too much space, I would direct the reader to the annotated bibliographies (through 1985) compiled by Robert J. Blanch (1983, 1991). My own position, as will shortly become clear, is that the poem acknowledges the decline or shortcomings of the chivalric life and its ideals but displaces the blame for these deficiencies onto a source outside chivalry itself. For a similar view of displacement as a means of maintaining chivalry's integrity, see Kamps 1989.

- 2 I shall use 'chivalry' not in its most technical medieval sense (the arts of fighting and interacting with other knights) but rather in a more general discursive manner: a code of homosocial, heterosexual, and martial conduct through which aristocratic male subjectivity was constructed. On the differing senses of the term, see Keen, 1–2. In this chivalric context, 'homosocial relations' are not necessarily amicable ones, as the code includes aggression, retaliation, challenges, and the like.
- 3 Although an explicit motive behind Keen's *Chivalry* is to rebut views such as this one, there is much evidence that by the late fourteenth century chivalry was *understood* as declining, especially due to the emphasis on heterosexual love as becoming an important part of the code. In Middle English literature, for example, both Gower's *Vox clamantis* (V, 1–8) and Chaucer's juxtaposition of the Knight and Squire in the General Prologue (ll. 43–100) suggest such an understanding.
- 4 Here, the use of sodomitical allusion is one which seeks to displace the instability of just such a group onto women (hence protecting and not critiquing the group's power of status). Further, while forging the connection between misogyny and sodomy, this misogynistic employment of sodomy also illustrates the flexibility of sodomy's usefulness as a negative cultural association.
- 5 Sheila Fisher's 'Taken Men and Token Women', (71–10) has briefly indicated the possibility of a homosexual subtext in the poem. Despite my general acceptance of her overall analysis of the poem, our readings of the subtext's implications, as I shall discuss shortly, diverge considerably.
- 6 The exchange-of-winnings motif appears only in the *Miles Gloriosus*, a minor analogue to *Sir Gawain*. For sources and analogues, see Elisabeth Brewer 1974 and 1992; also Renoir 'Minor Analogue.'
- 7 Tolkien and Gordon, ll. 1105–11. Subsequent references cited parenthetically in text. Unless otherwise noted, all modern renderings are my own.
- 8 Perhaps the comment by John Burrow (1965) that the bedroom scenes seem remarkably fabliaux-esque is much closer to the mark than he supposed; see 73–75.
- 9 *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. 'chaungen.'
- 10 In Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems of Love and Friendship*, 138–39.
- 11 *Eneas*, ll. 8585–8695. The translation is that of Yunck, 1974, 226–27. BM Add. 14100, a late fourteenth-century copy of this text noted in Yunck, 4, is of English

provenance.

- 12 Since *Eneas* was circulating in England at the time that *Sir Gawain* was written, it is possible that the classical story of Aeneas was read or interpreted *through* the French version. On the relationship (though not convincingly direct) of the Middle English poem to the *Aeneid*, see Sanderlin 1978 and 1984, 13–14.
- 13 I shall return to this point below in my discussion of *Cleanness*.
- 14 On this point, see, for example, Heng 'Feminine Knots', 504. A good, brief summary (complete with relevant selected bibliography) of the significance of specific aspects of the shield is found in the notes of Silverstein's 1974 critical edition of *Sir Gawain*, 133–35.
- 15 Silverstein, *Sir Gawain*, 134–35. Silverstein argues somewhat implausibly that the term could signify *innocentia*, a part of justice.
- 16 The other two poems are *Patience* and *Pearl*. Several scholars have attempted to read one or more of the poems intertextually, though generally such an approach has been used to 'uncover' the 'true moral' meaning of the Arthurian poem—and to justify an overly moralized approach to medieval literature. One of the better examples of this approach, which uses the manuscript's illuminations, is Lee, 'The Illuminating Critic,' 17–46. For a further, and I hope not so heavy-handed, discussion of the hermeneutic that a manuscript compilation creates, see my 'Compilation as Commentary', 945–64.
- 17 Among others, Burrow, *A Reading*, 50, has pointed out that the pentangle's construction is such that a failure to maintain one part of the pentangle's virtues results in a breakdown of the sign's wholeness and its relationship to truth. Interestingly, Burrow, 48–49, notes that 'cleanness' in *Sir Gawain* is related to that found in *Cleanness* but fails to mention the word's frequent homosexual references in the latter poem.
- 18 Andrew and Waldron, *Poems of the 'Pearl' Manuscript*, 36. As with Burrow, *A Reading*, Andrew and Waldron mention 'cleanness' as a connecting theme but ignore any sodomitical implications for the Arthurian romance.
- 19 In this light, it seems significant to note that in *Eneas*, Lavinia's mother in l. 8619 calls Eneas a traitor, thus conflating treachery and sodomy in her homophobic diatribe.
- 20 Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice*, 96.
- 21 A fuller discussion of the complex relationship of intent, desire, and behavior in medieval sexual discourse is forthcoming in my *Sodomy, Silence, and Social Control*.
- 22 I accept here the interpretation and emendation used in Andrew and Waldron, *Poems*, 255.
- 23 Despite the way that the poem, much like the pentangle itself, is an interlocked structure whose parts continually (re)interpret one another, the significance of the bedroom/hunting scenes have typically been read through a one-way interpretative paradigm—especially when sexuality is the issue. See, for example, Mills, 'An Analysis of the Temptation Scenes,' 612–30.
- 24 Though some critics have challenged the relationship between Gawain's behavior and the symbolic significance of the animal hunted, I see no reason to reject the

general relational paradigm set up in Savage's 'Hunting Scenes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.' His specific explanations of the relationship have periodically been rewritten. See, for example, McClure, 'Gawain's *Mesure*': 375–85.

- 25 On the theological significance of Circumcision Day, see Neaman, 'Sir Gawain's Covenant': 30–42; on the relationship between decapitation and castration, see, for example, Freud's stunning but brief 'Medusa's Head,' 105–6.
- 26 Interestingly, while 'stiff' frequently means 'bold' or 'upright,' it is also used to describe an erect penis in Middle English 'dirty' poems.
- 27 Of the critics discussing this exchange, Brewer, *Symbolic Stories*, 77, has done so most economically, pronouncing the girdle 'a gift so *à propos* Gawain cannot refuse.'
- 28 On this entrapment and Gawain's 'fault' in concealing the girdle, see, for example, Benson, *Art and Tradition*, 224–26; Fisher, 'Taken Men,' 85–86; John Burrow, 'The Two Confession Scenes,' 73–9 (a bit clearer than the argument in *A Reading*); Laila Gross, 'Gawain's Acceptance,' 154–55; and Blanch, 'Imagery and Binding,' 53–60.
- 29 The girdle carries an undeniably sexual valence that ineluctably accompanies its many others. See Friedman and Osberg, 'Gawain's Girdle,' 301–15.
- 30 Generally, critics have either ignored Morgan's responsibility and the extent to which the poem revolves (misogynistically) around feminine actions and desires or have criticized her inclusion as a failure in the text. For some impressive correctives to these earlier judgments, see Fisher, 'Taken Men' and 'Leaving Morgan Aside,' 129–51; Heng, 'Feminine Knots'; and Moore, 'Making Sense of an Ending,' 213–33.
- 31 I would, in fact, argue that the relationship between homophobia and misogyny elaborated in postmodern queer theory has its most immediate roots in late medieval culture. In such work, however, the role of the Middle Ages in shaping modern culture is at best minimized.
- 32 Bloch, in *Medieval Misogyny*, argues persuasively that courtly love is at heart misogynistic. I think that in its overall project, *Sir Gawain* supports Bloch's primary thesis. I would, however, further Bloch's argument by recalling the psychoanalytic commonplace that misogyny is a *displaced* reaction formation against homosexual desire. Hence the relationship between misogyny and courtly love is an even closer one, for both are subtended by—and always threaten to disclose—the queer.
- 33 As Fisher, 'Taken Men,' 79, points out, we learn retrospectively that while it seems throughout most of the poem Lady Bertilak is acting on her husband's wishes (I have consciously assumed this fiction until now to maintain temporarily the poem's patriarchal assumptions) she has actually been acting on Morgan's all along. Interestingly, Bertilak's claims of having ultimate control over his wife's behavior (ll.2358–62) are revealed as false. In other words, he might have sent her, but he was acting to achieve Morgan's goals. Fisher, 'Taken Men,' 89, interprets Bertilak's claim as a failed attempt to reappropriate masculine control.

- 34 The text is contained in von der Hagen, *Gessammtabenteuer*, 455–78. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Valerie Hotchkiss for sharing this text, on which she is presently preparing a study, with me.
- 35 *Le Lai de Lanval*, ed. J. Rychner (Gèneve, 1958), ll. 277–85. The translation is that of Burgess and Busby, 76. The Middle English translation of the poem tones down this homosexual accusation by making it implicit: the queen simply states that Launfal loves no woman, no woman him, and that he should be destroyed. This shift of an explicit homosexual positioning to the subtextual level is similar in technique to the use of sodomitical allusion in *Sir Gawain*.
- 36 On the relationship between beavers and castration, see the useful, though rather exegetical, discussion in Curley, 'Bertilak's Beard,' 69–73.
- 37 On this geography, see Edgeworth, 'Anatomical Geography,' 318–19; on the expulsion of the feminine, cf. Heng, 'Feminine Knots,' 507.
- 38 Andrew and Waldron, *Poems*, 233 n. to l. 681, comment that the poem contains 'a remarkably detached view of the ideas of chivalry.'
- 39 Interestingly, Gower's earlier-mentioned critique of chivalry revolves around the adoration (and hence controlling force) of women being incorporated into, and causing a reinterpretation of, the chivalric code.
- 40 I should point out, however, that several studies have contended that the poem is a non-recuperative critique of chivalry and the court—a typical recent example is Hamilton, 'Chivalry as Sin,' 113–17. One study has at least come relatively close to the mark by realizing that chivalry's decline was related in some fashion to women in the poem see Fletcher, 'Sir Gawain's Anti-feminism,' 53–58.
- 41 Though Fisher, 'Taken Men,' and I agree that women pose a threat to homosociality, she fails to realize adequately the relationship of the threat of sodomy and homosexual desire to the poem's final antifeminist thrust.
- 42 See, for example, Mieli, *Homosexuality and Liberation*, 153–65; Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, 35. Cf., however, Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 245–46; and Owens, 'Outlaws,' 231. I do not agree that Freud, or even Ferenczi for that matter, are nearly as homophobic as modern critics have held, even though psychoanalytic work was later used homophobically. See Abelow, 'Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans,' 383–93.
- 43 On the 'non-sexual' sexual inscription or recoding of different kinds of male interaction, see Hyatte, 'Recoding Ideal Male Friendship,' 505–18; and Susan Crane, 'Brotherhood and the Construction of Courtship in Arthurian Romance' (paper delivered at MLA, 1992, New York).
- 44 This would actually support Marchello-Nizia's thesis.
- 45 See Brewer, *Symbolic Stories*, 90; and Rudnytsky, 'Oedipal Temptation,' 371–83.
- 46 From this perspective, the repositioning of Bertilak as secular father-confessor also takes on a queer valence.
- 47 On the scar as vagina, see Heng, 'Feminine Knots,' 511, n.20.
- 48 Ralph Hanna's 'Unlocking What's Locked,' 289–302 contains the best discussion of the girdle as empty sign circulated and (re)appropriated. The most extended discussion of the girdle as sign, which also interprets much of the poem in terms

of *commercium*, is Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle*. On sign theory in general, with discussions of both girdle and wound, see Arthur, *Medieval Sign Theory*.

- 49 I agree with Andrew and Waldron, *Poems*, 299, n. to l. 2515, on the logic of this emendation, first proposed by Burrow, 'Two Notes,' 43–45.
- 50 Fisher, 'Taken Men,' 98–99, reads the threat as purely a feminine one and points out that while the girdle's reappropriation marks a misogynistic moment in the text, it also assures that traces of the feminine will always help constitute the court's homosociality: 'Regardless of the inversions and the redefinitions that the girdle has undergone, regardless of the marginalization of women in the poem, Morgan is still Arthur's half-sister and Gawain's aunt. Her blood is still in the court, just as the girdle cannot ever entirely escape its associations with the Lady. And now that the girdle is *de rigueur* courtly attire, women's presence in the court is even more obvious, even if its meaning has been diminished by appropriation... And if the now reintegrated court blithely wears the green girdle as a sign of its own honor, the poem may well be lamenting its youthful shortsightedness.' Cf. Heng, 'Feminine Knots,' 508–09.

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BYZANTIUM: A FRIENDLY SOCIETY?*

The student of the medieval west has no difficulty when asked about concepts of friendship. He or she can go direct to a great mass of friendship writing in letters, sermons and prayers and, in particular, to works on friendship which have been described by a recent critic as "the systematic treatises on Christian friendship which the Fathers despite the richness and fluency of references to the subject had failed to provide".¹ Ailred of Rievaulx revised his *De spirituali amicitia* between 1164 and 1167, and Peter of Blois wrote his *De christiana amicitia* in the 1190s.² By then the floodgates were open; it has rightly

* This study is based on a paper commissioned for the Seventeenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies in Birmingham, March 1983. It was written in the legendary "favourable academic atmosphere" of Dumbarton Oaks. I have to thank Oliver Nicholson, Marie Taylor Davis and Roger Scott for their help during the writing and Peter Topping, Ruth Macrides, George Huxley and Judith Herrin for their comments on later drafts. As usual Anthony Bryer and Michael McGann stimulated and improved; my greatest debt is to Alexander Kazhdan for his generous and encouraging disagreement.

¹ J. McEvoy, "Notes on the Prologue of St. Aelred of Rievaulx's 'De Spirituali Amicitia', with a Translation", *Traditio*, xxxvii (1981), pp. 396-411. For letters, see, for example, the collections of St. Anselm, St. Bernard, Peter the Venerable and Peter of Blois; and J. Leclercq, "L'amitié dans les lettres au moyen âge", *Revue du moyen âge latin*, i (1949), pp. 391-410; sermons, for example, Bernard, *Sermo 26 in Cant.* (Patrologiae cursus completus, ed. J.-P. Migne, series latina [hereafter P.L.], clxxxiii, Paris, 1879), cols. 903-12. Anselm's prayer for his friends, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1946-61), iii, pp. 71-2; trans. B. Ward, S.L.G., as *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 212-15. See A. M. Fiske, "The Survival and Development of the Ancient Concept of Friendship in the Early Middle Ages" (Fordham Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1955), published as, for example, A. M. Fiske, "St. Anselm and Friendship", *Studia Monastica*, iii (1961), pp. 259-90; A. M. Fiske, *Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition* (Cidoc Cuaderno, li, Cuernavaca, 1970); an excellent short treatment in C. Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050-1200* (Church History Outlines, v, London, 1972), esp. ch. 5, pp. 96 ff.; and two forthcoming studies, of *amicitia* by J. McEvoy and of friendship in the monastic experience by B. P. McGuire.

² The major treatises of the twelfth century are as follows: c. 1120: William of St. Thierry, *De natura et dignitate amoris*, ed. and trans. in M. M. Davy, *Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu* (Paris, 1953), pp. 70-137; ed. S. Ceglar, S. D. B., forthcoming; trans. G. Webb and A. Walker (Mowbrays Fleur de Lys Series of Spiritual Classics, x, London, 1956); trans. T. X. Davis (Cistercian Fathers, xxx, Kalamazoo, 1981). 1118-40: Hugh of St. Victor, *De laude caritatis* (P.L., clxxvi, Paris, 1854), cols. 969-76; trans. A Religious of C.S.M.V., *The Divine Love* (Mowbrays Fleur de Lys Series of Spiritual Classics, ix, London, 1956). 1142+: Ailred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis* (P.L., cxcv, Paris, 1855), cols. 505-620; ed. A. Hoste (Corpus christianorum continuatio medievalis, i, Turnhout, 1971), pp. 1-278; trans. G. Webb and A. Walker as *The*

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been said that friendship was fashionable in the twelfth-century west.³ These treatises are inspired by a slow assimilation of the writings of Cicero, St. Augustine and Cassian on friendship and present a Christian friendship conceived in the cloister but available to all.

But students of Byzantine friendship have no such major treatises to go to.⁴ They must grub around in the columns of chronicles and riddles, letters and ascetic catecheses. And what they find is not the gentle world of Canterbury under Anselm or Rievaulx under Ailred. This is not for scholarly neglect of the topic; while anthropologists who study friendship tend to bemoan the fact that theirs is a relatively neglected aspect of anthropology,⁵ the currently received view of Byzantium as a friendless society is based on a great deal of recent scholarly interest.

In fact Byzantine friendship has lately become almost a burning issue, thanks to the researches of Alexander Kazhdan as well as the contributions of Tinnefeld and Ljubarskij⁶ to our understanding of

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Mirror of Charity: The Speculum Caritatis of St. Aelred of Rievaulx (London, 1962); trans. E. Connor (Cistercian Fathers, xvii, Kalamazoo, forthcoming). Early 1140s, revised 1164-7: Ailred of Rievaulx, *De spirituali amicitia*, ed. J. Dubois (Bibliothèque de spiritualité médiévale, Paris and Bruges, 1948); trans. H. Talbot (London, 1942); M. E. Laker (Cistercian Fathers, v, Kalamazoo, 1977). 1190s: Peter of Blois, *De christiana amicitia*, ed. and trans. M. M. Davy as *Un traité d'amour du douzième siècle* (Paris, 1932).

³ A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and his Letters* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 13: "Friendship, like letter-writing, was fashionable among twelfth-century churchmen".

⁴ A minor exception is the *opoios dei einai tous doulous eis tous kurious kai tous kurious eis tous doulous* of Theodore Lascaris to which Michael Angold drew my attention. See E. Lappa-Zizicas, "Un traité inédit de Théodore II Lascaris", *Actes du VI^e congrès international d'études byzantines*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1950), i, pp. 119-26; and now for an edition, L. Tartaglia, "L'opuscolo de subjectorum in principem officiis di Teodor II Lascaris", *Diptycha*, ii (1981), pp. 187-209. It is clear in its almost legalistic treatment of reciprocal duties and rights between *philos* (the *doulos* or slave in question) and (the *kurios* or lord) emperor (described by Svoronos in terms of a contract) that it is a long way from the western treatises referred to here. See N. Svoronos, "Le serment de fidélité à l'empereur byzantin et sa signification constitutionnelle", *Revue des études byzantines*, ix (1951), p. 138. See also J. Verpeaux, "Les oikeioi: notes d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale", *Revue des études byzantines*, xxiii (1965), p. 91.

⁵ Y. A. Cohen, "Patterns of Friendship", in his *Social Structure and Personality: A Casebook* (New York, 1961), p. 351; R. Paine, "In Search of Friendship: An Exploratory Analysis in Middle-Class Culture", *Man*, new ser., iv (1969), p. 505; R. Brain, *Friends and Lovers* (London, 1976), p. 12. In fact both anthropologists dissatisfied with structural functionalism and sociologists of the Chicago symbolic interactionist school have converged on the study of friendship since the mid-1970s. I am deeply grateful to Amanda Shanks for first pointing me in their direction.

⁶ F. Tinnefeld, "Freundschaft in den Briefen des Michael Psellos: Theorie und Wirklichkeit", *Jahrbuch für österreichischen byzantinistischen Gesellschaft*, xxii (1973), pp. 151-68; J. N. Ljubarskij, *Michail Psell Lichnost' i tvorčestvo* [Michael Psellos:

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Psellos's concept of *philia*.⁷ First, in his article on Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022) in his book on Byzantine culture from the ninth to the twelfth century, and recently in *People and Power in Byzantium*, Kazhdan puts forward a developing view of friendship in Byzantine society.⁸ "The salient features of the social behaviour of Kekaumenos", he notes, "were his avoidance of social life and his fear of friendship".⁹ This he sees as typical of Byzantine perceptions, and describes the views of Kekaumenos (d. 1078) and Symeon the New Theologian on friendship as a "traditional ethical concept"¹⁰ which was to be challenged by the more welcoming views of Psellos (d. ?1078) and Eustathios (d. 1195-8/9). And finally, in his recent work on twelfth-century literature he states that "although the praise of friendship was commonplace among the ancients it is not a standard topos in Byzantine literature".¹¹ And he fits this fear of friendship into his overall view of Byzantine society as loose-knit with very few horizontal or vertical ties as compared with the medieval west. "The

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Personality and Creativity] (Moscow, 1978); J. N. Ljubarskij, "Psell v. otnosheniya s. sovremennikami" [Psellos on Attitudes to Contemporary Events], *Palestinskii Sbornik*, xxiii (1971), pp. 125-43. I must thank Natalia Teteriatnikov for her help with these works. See also now M. J. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204: A Political History* (London and New York, 1984), pp. 80-1; E. Patlagean, "Byzantium in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", in P. Veyne (ed.), *A History of Private Life, i: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1987), pp. 613-15.

⁷ *Philia* I take to be the commonest word in Byzantine Greek for friendship, and devoid of the contrast between *eros* and *agape*, but see J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1980) on the problems of such distinctions. Boswell's interpretation, while not unproblematic, casts, for example, fresh light on Morris's problem (*Discovery of the Individual*, p. 96): "modern readers of the letters of Anselm of Canterbury and the poems of Jaufre Rudel have sometimes concluded that the monk was in love with his friend and the poet not in love with his lady". I have largely side-stepped the issue in this article, though I hope to take it up in a study of the detection of relationship in Byzantine literary texts. In any case the whole question of erotic expression in Byzantium is in need of assessment following the publication of H.-G. Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon* (Munich, 1986).

⁸ A. P. Kazhdan, "Predvaritel'nie zamechanija o mirovozzrenii vizantijskogo mistika x-xi vv. Simeona" [Preliminary Observations on the *Weltanschauung* of Symeon, Byzantine Mystic of the Tenth to Eleventh Century], *Byzantinoslavica*, xxviii (1967), pp. 19-20; A. P. Kazhdan, *Byzanz und seine Kultur*, trans. G. Janka (Berlin, 1968), pp. 118-19, 174; A. P. Kazhdan (with G. Constable), *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, 1982), pp. 26 ff. Cf. now A. P. Kazhdan and A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), pp. 208, 132.

⁹ Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium*, p. 28.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ A. P. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Cambridge and Paris, 1984), p. 172. I am grateful to Kazhdan for allowing me to read this work in typescript.

one form of association that flourished in Byzantium", he argues, "was the family".¹²

Kazhdan's is an attractive view which accords well, for example, with recent characterizations of the ethos of Byzantine literary society¹³ and will not surprise the student of modern Greek anthropology. This is John Campbell's characterization of the *Sarakatsanaioi*: "Families not connected by kinship or marriage are related through institutions of mutual hostility and competition, and unrelated families view one another at all times with intense distrust".¹⁴ Kekaumenos, who notes that many good men have come to a sticky end through friendship, losing their money, their lives and even their souls,¹⁵ would, one feels, have been happy among the *Sarakatsanaioi* — or at least equally miserable. But it may be questioned whether Kazhdan's is not too sweeping a view to be applied to the whole of Byzantine society, metropolitan and provincial, over the full span of its existence.

Certainly we should be careful not to exaggerate the case against friendship. No one, surely, would claim that there were *no* extra-familial links in Byzantine society.¹⁶ Religious confraternities,¹⁷ guilds,¹⁸ the people not connected by blood who are commemorated in *typika* (monastic foundation charters) or formed parts of households¹⁹ indicate that the family was not the whole story. On the other hand, we should not play down its immense importance. "Patronage

¹² Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium*, p. 32.

¹³ I. Ševčenko, "Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century", in M. Berza and E. Stănescu (eds.), *Actes du XIV congrès international d'études byzantines*, 3 vols. (Bucharest, 1974), i, pp. 69-92; P. Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery", in M. J. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries* (British Archaeological Reports, International Series, cccxi, Oxford, 1984), pp. 58-78.

¹⁴ J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (New York and Oxford, 1964), p. v.

¹⁵ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, #118, ed. B. Wassilevsky and V. Jernstedt (St. Petersburg, 1896), p. 50. But cf. the strictures of Giovanni Morelli and Leon Battista Alberti quoted by R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York and London, 1982), p. 30, in a chapter where he brilliantly demonstrates the centrality of friendship alongside kin and neighbourhood in late medieval Florence.

¹⁶ It should be pointed out that Kazhdan agrees that it is a matter of nuances: "If someone launches an attack against the thesis of non-existence of extra-family links in Byzantium, he will waste his time and efforts".

¹⁷ J. Nesbitt and J. Wiita, "A Confraternity of the Comnenian Era", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, lxxviii (1975), pp. 360-84.

¹⁸ S. Vryonis, "Byzantine *Demokratia* and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xvii (1963), pp. 287-314.

¹⁹ See R. Morris, "The Byzantine Aristocracy and the Monasteries", in Angold (ed.), *Byzantine Aristocracy*, pp. 112-37; P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos", *ibid.*, pp. 92-111. I am indebted to John Nesbitt for advice on this point.

often borrows the language of kinship and also utilises the links of kin", wrote Gellner,²⁰ and this seems very true of Byzantium. The use of kinship terms to designate other relationships — *pater pneumatikos*, *adelphos* for an acquaintance or colleague, *uios* for a pupil or *anepsios* for an ex-pupil — all are encountered in Byzantine sources and have to be decoded.²¹ Ahrweiler suddenly realizes why Psellos had so many nephews — they were the sons of people he addressed as *adelphos*.²² The process of adoption,²³ and in particular the operation of ritual kinship,²⁴ the major social link outside the family, also points to this fact. The word *koumbaros* is late Byzantine if not later, but there are also earlier occasional references in the sources to *paranymphei* and *nympheutai*, who appear to fill something of the same function. In modern Greek society, the *koumbaros*-figure is a close friend, combining the duties of best man and godfather, at least to the first child.²⁵ He replaces the natural parents at baptism and

²⁰ E. Gellner, "Patrons and Clients", in E. Gellner and J. Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London, 1977), at p. 1. An obvious example is among the Bangwa, where patron and client address one another as "father" and "child" respectively: see Brain, *Friends and Lovers*, p. 115. Ruth Macrides points me to two thirteenth-century examples of emperors officially designating friends as "brother": this is almost a title from which the friend obtains benefits. Demetrios Tornikes, *mesazon* of John III Batatzes, referred to as the emperor's brother in *prostigmata*: see F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi Sacra et Profana*, iv (Vienna, 1871), iv, 41, 247; George Pachymeres, *Michael Palaiologos*, i, 21, ed. I. Bekker (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae [hereafter C.S.H.B.], Bonn, 1835), i, p. 64.14-17, claims that Tornikes's sons received considerable prestige from the fact that their father had been called "brother" by the Emperor John. There is also the George Mouzalon and Theodore II Lascaris *philia*. Theodore calls him *autadelphos* in letters, and the lemma to a treatise dedicated to Mouzalon states that "he deemed him worthy to be called his brother".

²¹ Spiritual father, brother, son, nephew respectively. Cf. the explanation of the use of kinship terms as "part of a tradition of erotic address between men which has no standard terms of relations": Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, p. 193.

²² H. Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur le société byzantin au XIe siècle: nouvelles hierarchies et nouvelles solidarités", *Travaux et Mémoires*, vi (1976), p. 109.

²³ R. Macrides, "Adoption and Sponsorship among the Byzantine Aristocracy" (paper given to the Sixteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Edinburgh, 1982).

²⁴ E. Patlagean, "Christianisation et parentés rituelles: le domaine de Byzance", *Annales E.S.C.*, xxxiii (1978), pp. 625-36. For the use of the language of kinship to describe relationships formed through baptismal sponsorship and the importance of friendship as a basis for entering into such relationships, see R. Macrides, "The Byzantine Godfather", *Byzantine and Mod. Greek Studies*, forthcoming.

²⁵ On the options available, see S. W. Mintz and E. R. Wolf, "An Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood (compadrazgo)", *South West J. Anthropology*, vi (1950), pp. 341-65. Byzantine society in the eleventh century, a period of rapid social change, might be a good test case of their typology: they would expect that compadrazgo mechanisms multiplied to meet the accelerated rate of change. As a corrective to over-

cannot marry into the family. The reciprocal use of the institution in modern Greek and Cypriot society to obtain a protector and extend one's influence in a village may also be paralleled in Byzantium: Peter Loizos notes that "national politicians took trouble to baptise children in Kalo village"; we note that when Michael III went slumming it in the house of the poor woman he met on emerging from the bath-house, we are told that he had baptized her son.²⁶ Then again, although friendship may be defined as "those *supra*- and *extra*-kin relationships and bonds which are entered into voluntarily and/or are culturally recognised",²⁷ there can be friendships between kinsmen: Eustathios made it clear that close relatives can also be true friends and should not be neglected.²⁸ Monodies written by brother for brother often pack a greater charge of emotion than anything else in Byzantine literature.²⁹ And what are we to make of the relationship of bright nephew and episcopal uncle which was so successful in placing rhetors in jobs in Constantinople in the twelfth century, men

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hasty identification of ritual kinship with patronage, M. Gilsenan, "Against Patron-Client Relations", in Gellner and Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients*, pp. 167-83; similarly of the confusion of ritual kinship with friendship, K. O. L. Burridge, "Friendship in Tangu", *Oceania*, xxvii (1957), p. 187. *Koumbaros* is not attested in Greek before the fourteenth century and appears to be derived from the Italian *compare*. It remains to be seen whether this means that the full compadrazgo relationship including sponsorship of the first child in baptism was not an original feature of the institution in Greece: see R. Macrides, forthcoming.

²⁶ P. Loizos, "Politics and Patronage in a Cypriot Village, 1920-1970", in Gellner and Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients*, pp. 115-35, at p. 127; Symeon Magister, *Chronographia*, De Michaelē et Theodora, xvii, ed. I. Bekker (C.S.H.B., Bonn, 1838), p. 660.

²⁷ Cohen, "Patterns of Friendship", p. 352, but see below, n. 59, for a less self-confident attempt at definition.

²⁸ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, ii, ed. M. van der Valk (Leiden, 1976), p. 95.5-7; see Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, p. 176. George Huxley reminds me that Aristotle regarded the family as an instance of *philia*: *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.i.3 (1155a); VIII.viii.3 (1159a); VIII.ix.2 (1159b); VIII.x.4 (1160b); VIII.xii.8 (1161b); VIII.xiv.4 (1163b); IX.ii.7-9 (1155a); *Eudemian Ethics*, VII.iii.1-5 (1241,1,b.); viii (1242a); x.1 (1242a); x.7 (1242a). Note S. Wallman, "Kinship, A-Kinship, Anti-Kinship: Variations in the Logic of Kinship Situations", in E. Leyton (ed.), *The Compact: Selected Dimensions of Friendship* (Newfoundland Social and Economic Papers, iii, Newfoundland, 1974), p. 115: "it is mistaken to suppose that relationships between kin are necessarily kin relations".

²⁹ For example, Theophylact of Ochrid for his brother Demetrios, ed. P. Gautier, *Revue des études byzantines*, xxi (1963), pp. 171-5; re-ed. in *Théophylacte d'Achride: discours, traités, poésies* (C.S.H.B., xvi/1, Thessalonika, 1980), pp. 368-77; for others, Christopher of Mitylene on his brother John, Isidore Meles on his brother Constantine, Nikephoros Basilakes on his brother Constantine, Michael Choniates on his brother Niketas, all reminiscent of Gregory of Nazianzos's oration on his brother Kaisarion; see my "Theophylact through his Letters: The Two Worlds of an Exile-Bishop" (Univ. of Birmingham Ph.D. thesis, 1981), pp. 423 ff.

like Theodore Prodromos, Michael *o tou* Thessalonikes, possibly Eustathios and the Choniates brothers? This is a clear example of a pattern of patronage (if not of instrumental friendship) — and it is certainly not extra-kin.³⁰ So relationships we would normally define as friendship or patronage either may be multiplex and include blood relationship or may be described in terms of blood tie. But that does not mean that extra-kin relationships did not exist and were not as important a social glue as kinship itself.

The other side of the picture is clear: Byzantine intellectuals never lost the classical heritage of philosophical discussions of friendship.³¹ The rediscovery of Cicero's *De amicitia* could have no parallel in the east where the views of Plato and Aristotle, not to say Gregory of Nazianzos and Maximos the Confessor, were widely available.³² And in the Byzantine letter at least, the praise of friendship was a standard topos. As I have previously observed,³³ the letter had been linked with friendship from a very early stage of its history: "The letter as a genre", wrote Jean Darrouzès, "is essentially concerned with friendship".³⁴ Letters are full of friendly sentiment, of expressions of the abstract idea of friendship and of the relationship of the letter to friendship. Letters maintained or even created friendships; some letter-friends had never met. "A friendship without letters", wrote Leo of Synnada, "is a lamp without oil".³⁵ Much of the imagery used to express friendship is culled from very ancient sources: the

³⁰ Niketas *o tou Serron*, Michael *o tou Anchialou*, possibly George Tornikes should be added to the list: see J. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie byzantine* (Archives de l'orient chrétien, x, Paris, 1966), p. 56; L. Stiernon, "Notes de prosopographie et de titulature byzantine", *Revue des études byzantines*, xxi (1963), p. 185; V. Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen innerhalb des Konstantinopolitanischen Klerus während die Komnenenzeit", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, lxii (1969), p. 34. On the relation of mother's brother and sister's son in a non-kin situation, see Mintz and Wolf, "Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood", p. 9.

³¹ The best recent study is by J.-C. Fraisse, *Philia: la notion d'amitié dans la philosophie antique* (Paris, 1974), replacing L. Dugas, *L'amitié antique d'après les moeurs populaires et les théories des philosophes* (Paris, 1894); K. Treu, "Freundschaft", *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, viii (1972), cols. 418-34.

³² Gregory of Nazianzos, Or. 11 (Patrologiae cursus completus, ed. J.-P. Migne, series graeca [hereafter P.G.], xxxv, Paris, 1886), cols. 831-42; Maximos Confessor, *Kephalaia Theologika*, vi, *peri philon kai philadelphias* (P.G., xci, Paris, 1865), cols. 753-64.

³³ M. E. Mullett, "The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter", in M. E. Mullett and R. Scott (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham, 1981), pp. 75-93, esp. pp. 79 ff.

³⁴ J. Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins du x^e siècle* (Paris, 1960), p. 48.

³⁵ Leo of Synnada, ep. 34 (from Stephen of Nicomedeia), ed. Darrouzès, *ibid.*, p. 192; cf. Michael Psellos, ep. S.14, ed. K. N. Sathas, in *Mesaionike Bibliothekē*, 7 vols. (Paris and Venice, 1876), v, pp. 253-4.

Aristophanes myth in Plato's *Symposium*, the idea of an *allos ego*, the *unio mystica*.³⁶ The early Christian idea of friendship in Christ affected writers,³⁷ and there is a very strong impression in many Byzantine writers of the author's appreciation of his friends as people as well as embodiments of ideas.

But is this commitment to friendship in the epistolary literature simply the icing on the cake of learning? Have concepts rooted in the Athens of Plato and Aristotle any real meaning for the Byzantium of Kekaumenos? Are they simply the artificial conceits of a literary freemasonry? In what follows I propose to reflect on the role of *philia* in Byzantine society in general, not just on the exalted heights occupied by Psellos and his friends. And like Kazhdan I shall take careful note of the sayings of writers who could by no stretch of the imagination be thought of as part of the intellectual élite: Symeon the New Theologian would have been profoundly insulted to be so described, and no one has yet called Kekaumenos an intellectual.³⁸

Admittedly it is easy to find examples of bad friendships in most periods of Byzantine history: the *schadenfreude* of Philaretos's Job's comforters;³⁹ the wonderful description of how the boon companion

³⁶ Another self; the mystical union. See G. Karlsson, *Idéologie et cérémonial dans l'épistolographie byzantine* (Studia Graeca Uppsaliensia, iii, Uppsala, 1962), ch. 38, pp. 58-60.

³⁷ For the largely negative biblical attitude to friendship, see Treu, "Freundschaft", but note the much more positive attitudes of early Fathers: for example, M. A. McNamara, *Friendship in St. Augustine* (Freiburg, 1958); A. M. Fiske, "St. Augustine and Friendship", *Monastic Studies*, ii (1964), pp. 127-35; V. Nolte, *Augustinus Freundschaftsideal in seinen Briefen* (Würzburg, 1939); P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London, 1967), ch. 6, pp. 61-4; P. Fabre, *S. Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne* (Paris, 1949). Paulinus reorganized his entire circle of friends on his conversion. K. Treu, "Philia und Agape: Zur Terminologie der Freundschaft bei Basilios u. Gregor von Nazianz", *Studi Classici*, iii (1961), pp. 421-7. For patristic friendship in practice, see now R. Van Dam, "Emperor, Bishops and Friends in Late Antique Cappadocia", *Jl. Theological Studies*, new ser., xxxvii (1986), pp. 53-76.

³⁸ This is a generally held view: for example, I. Ševčenko, "Constantinople Viewed from the Eastern Provinces in the Middle Byzantine Period", in I. Ševčenko and F. E. Sysyn (eds.), *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak* (Harvard Ukrainian Studies, iii/iv, pt. 2, Cambridge, Mass., 1979-80), p. 727: "the mind it reveals was free of the constraints and pitfalls of the court and practically unencumbered by the burden of the classical literary tradition", but two qualifications are necessary: one that it is dangerous to underestimate Kekaumenos's rhetoricity, second that the concept of the intellectual in Byzantium is overdue for refinement; see, however, Ševčenko's definition in "Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century", p. 69.

³⁹ Niketas, *Bios kai Politeia tou en agiois patros emon Philaretou tou Eleemonos*, ed. and French trans. M. H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, *Byzantion*, ix (1934), pp. 115-17, but note the good friend, the official, who "out of respect for their long-standing friendship" gave him four mules with forty *modioi* of wheat (p. 133).

Basil leaves the emperor's table "as if for some natural function" and heads instead for the imperial bedchamber and usurpation;⁴⁰ the sad story of the affection lavished on the actor by Constantine IX and the disappointment it caused him⁴¹ — clearly these "models of friendship are precious and rare but the friendship of models is not". Malalas tells us the story of Eudokia and the apple. A poor man presented Theodosius II with "a Phrygian apple of enormous size, so big as to defy description". The emperor paid the man, sent the apple to his wife, who sent it to the magister Paulinos "since he was a friend of the emperor", and he, not knowing it had come from the emperor in the first place, presented it to him. All hell broke loose: Eudokia claimed she had eaten the apple, Theodosius suspected she was in love with Paulinus — and had him executed. Ultimately a bad friendship, but clearly a friendship: we are told that Theodosius had promoted Paulinus through all the ranks, because he was his friend, matchmaker for his marriage and table companion.⁴² We begin to see what it means to be a friend in Byzantium.

But the classic warning is Kekaumenos's advice on entertaining a friend (he must be easily the worst friend in history):

If you have a friend from elsewhere who comes to the town where you live, do not put him up in your house, but let him stay somewhere else and send him what he needs — it's better like that. If he stays in your house, let me tell you what unpleasantnesses will occur. First, your wife, your daughter and your daughter-in-law will not be able to leave their rooms to set the house to rights. If it so happens that they have to come out, your friend will make himself loudly obvious and hang on them with his eyes. If he gets the chance he will make a pass at your wife, look at her with immodest eyes and misuse her if possible. In any case, on departure he

⁴⁰ Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (C.S.H.B., Bonn, 1842), pp. 250-1.

⁴¹ Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, vi.139-55, ed. E. Renauld, ii (Paris, 1928), pp. 38-48. This represents an interesting case: both this and the previous episode have suggestions of homoeroticism. There is no reason to doubt that homosexual relations and relationships existed in Byzantium: see P. Koukoules, *Byzantion bios kai politismos*, vi (Athens, 1955), pp. 505-39. What is interesting here is that the commentator's disapprobation is entirely concerned with the lack of reciprocity involved and in the friendship as *non-functioning*. The erotic (or non-erotic) quality of the relationship is not viewed as significant.

⁴² John Malalas, *Chronographia*, xiv, ed. L. Dindorf (C.S.H.B., Bonn, 1831), pp. 356-8. It is possible that the shock waves of the story may have involved incest, since Paulinus was *mesanta to gamo* (go-between, sponsor) for the imperial couple. I owe this example and much helpful discussion of the ideas in this paper to Roger Scott. The category "friend of the emperor", already notable in early imperial Rome (see F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London and New York, 1977), pp. 110-22), turns up fairly frequently in early Byzantine sources (for example, *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, xli, ed. A. Cameron and J. Herrin, in *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, x, Leiden, 1984), p. 112.15), almost as if it were a title: see n. 19 above.

will boast of such unholiness. And even if he doesn't say it himself your enemy will throw it at your face in battle.⁴³

This surely is the heart of the matter: Kekaumenos is not afraid of friendship in the abstract; he is afraid of what bad friends do to you. And one thing that they do to you is gossip. One is reminded of the power of gossip in the Euboian village Juliet Du Boulay writes about, but there it is clear that gossip has a consolidating and confirming function in the small community of the village.⁴⁴ In the looser structure of Kekaumenos's world, gossip is an unmitigated evil: a bad friend and a snake are just the same: out of the mouth of both of them comes poison.⁴⁵

Byzantine writers in fact rarely talk about *philia*; they talk about *philoï*; Kekaumenos spends a great deal of time telling his readers whom *not* to choose for a friend. Many strategoi (military commanders) have suffered from people they thought were friends. An old enemy does not become a new friend. In time of revolt a few friends around you are useful.⁴⁶ Manuel Karatenos-Sarantenos sums up the difference between a good friend and a bad friend:

The good friend is mobile bliss,
The bad one a walking disaster.⁴⁷

We can flesh this out from other sources: good friends keep faith, provide support, ignore slander, hate the people you hate; bad friends gossip, eat you out of house and home, seduce your wife, flatter you and behave hypocritically. Psellos's letter to the nephews of Keroullarios gives them good advice on how to keep friendships alive, and Eustathios wrote a whole sermon on what to do when your friends fall out with each other.⁴⁸ An examination of attitudes to

⁴³ Kekaumenos, #101, ed. Wassilewsky and Jernstedt, pp. 42-3. Patricia Karlin-Hayter first drew my attention to the punchline of this story.

⁴⁴ J. Du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 205, 210-13. Perhaps the best parallel is again with the Sarakatsanaioi, where gossip is feared and hated: Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, pp. 312-15. Certainly among other communities, for example the Tangu of New Guinea, the chief function of a friend is to raise the prestige of his friend by gossip: Burridge, "Friendship in Tangu", p. 180. On the etymology of the word (=godsib), see Mintz and Wolf, "Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood", p. 341; Brain, *Friends and Lovers*, ch. 4, "Gossips and Godchildren".

⁴⁵ Kekaumenos, #145, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Kekaumenos, #168, p. 64.

⁴⁷ Manuel Karatenos-Sarantenos, poem 4, ed. U. Criscuolo, "Altri inediti di Manuele Karatenos o Sarantenos", *Epeteris tes Etaireias Byzantinon Spoudon*, xliv (1979-80), p. 162. I have reversed the order of the lines in translation.

⁴⁸ Michael Psellos, ep. S.208, ed. Sathas, pp. 513-23; Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, Esc. Y-II-10, fo. 46: see Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, pp. 175 ff.

friends, friendship and letters of friendship in the near-contemporaries Anselm of Canterbury and Theophylact of Ochrid⁴⁹ reveals that, despite the fact that Anselm's friendships were famous in his own day⁵⁰ whereas Theophylact has been characterized as more interested in the privileges and possessions of the church,⁵¹ the real difference between them was that for Anselm a supreme aim in life was *verus amor*, while for Theophylact what mattered most was an *alethinos philos*.⁵² Anselm's approach is much more idealistic than Theophylact's: he values the idea of friendship rather than the individuals who practise it or the means by which they do so; Theophylact's is an essentially practical approach:⁵³ he values the means rather than the ideal and in fact the network rather than the individual. His love is built on need, mutually understood if not shared, while Anselm's is a love without need, more perfect, but to his friends at least, less satisfying.

My explanation of this would be that the Byzantines took a very practical view of friendship: whether it was the emotional support of exiled bishops longing to get back to the bright lights of Constantinople⁵⁴ or Theodore of Stoudios's ready-made resistance movement so well analysed by Paul Alexander,⁵⁵ friendships were expected to work for friends. A friendship was a failure if it failed to serve its purpose. Throw out a bad friendship, said Kekaumenos, and don't be afraid if you are slandered for it.⁵⁶ Ahrweiler saw very clearly⁵⁷ the social basis of the friendships of the circle of Psellos: his interventions on behalf of his friends indicate and reinforce his own power

⁴⁹ See my "Theophylact through his Letters", Section II, ch. 4, "Letters to Friends", pp. 270-308.

⁵⁰ R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford, 1970), p. 13.

⁵¹ Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium*, p. 28.

⁵² True love as against a true friend.

⁵³ George Huxley suggests that this was true also in the ancient world; cf. the proverb quoted in fr. 15 of Archilochos, in M. L. West, *Iambi et elegi graeci*, i (Oxford, 1971), p. 7.

⁵⁴ R. Browning, "Unpublished Correspondence between Michael Italicus, Archbishop of Philippopolis and Theodore Prodromos", *Byzantinobulgarica*, i (1962), pp. 279-97; Ševčenko, "Constantinople Viewed from the Eastern Provinces", pp. 738-40; Mullett, "Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter", p. 91; Mullett, "Theophylact through his Letters", Section IV, ch. 5, "Theophylact's Exile Imagery".

⁵⁵ P. J. Alexander, "Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Methods and Justifications", *Speculum*, lii (1977), pp. 238-64.

⁵⁶ Kekaumenos, #143, pp. 60-1.

⁵⁷ Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur le société byzantin", p. 109; cf. also N. Duyé, "Un haut fonctionnaire byzantin du xi^e siècle: Basile Malesses", *Revue des études byzantines*, xxx (1972), pp. 167 ff.

in society. New men are moving fast on to the rungs of the ladder; those already established widen their network. Here is no matter of Platonic metaphysics, but the very power structures of the eleventh century. Friendship in Byzantium may be more important than scholars have thought.

There is some evidence that some Byzantines would have agreed. Certainly in the eleventh century, when there is a certain amount of interest in the topic, it is seen as absolutely at the core of society. Again and again in the hymns of Symeon the New Theologian friends are bracketed with relatives as the essential elements of the outside world: "You have rescued me from the dreadful and vain world, from my relatives and friends and illicit pleasures, and have deigned to place me here as on a mountain"; "and those who have renounced the world and at the same time all their relatives, friends and companions"; "from my father and brothers, relatives and friends, from the land of my birth you have closed me off"; "Speak of death, give air to numerous and necessary reflections useful to your friends just as to your relations".⁵⁸ Kekaumenos also takes friendship absolutely for granted in many passages in the *Strategikon* — where he is not warning his relatives against believing a toparch's word or mistrusting his own ability to keep secrets in his cups, the context of several warnings against friendship. The very first reference to a friend in the work shows Kekaumenos in the act of intervening on his behalf — but not too obviously, lest it be thought that he was doing it only for gifts. That, he says, harms both yourself and the one you are mediating for.⁵⁹ He has strong views on what one should or should not do for a *philos*, but that one should do something is not in doubt. Quite naturally friends creep into the discussion of extraneous matters: "Your friends and your wife will try to persuade you: 'Take a good post in local government and then you will be able to look after yourself, your *oikos* [household] and your *anthropoi* [men]'".⁶⁰ Theodore Prodromos, in his verse drama *Friendship in Exile*,⁶¹ saw the world as regulated by friendship.

⁵⁸ Symeon the New Theologian, Hymn 49.5-7, ed. J. Koder, iii (Sources chrétiennes, cxvii, Paris, 1973), p. 146; Hymn 41.240-1, p. 30; Hymn 21.374-7, ii (Paris, 1971), p. 158; Hymn 56.7-8, iii, p. 272. Cf. also Hymn 14.31, i (Sources chrétiennes, clvi, Paris, 1969), p. 268; Hymn 18.126-7, ii, p. 84; Hymn 20.98-9, ii, p. 118; Hymn 22.119-20, ii, p. 180; Hymn 56.7-8, iii, p. 274; *Kephalaia praktika*, iii.13, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources chrétiennes, li, Paris, 1957), p. 83; *Catecheses*, xxx.60-1, ed. B. Krivocheine, iii (Sources chrétiennes, cxiii, Paris, 1965), p. 198.

⁵⁹ Kekaumenos, #5, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Kekaumenos, #96, p. 40.

⁶¹ Theodore Prodromos, *Epi Apodemou tei philiai* (P.G., cxxxiii, Paris, 1864), cols. 1321-32.

A definition of friendship is not easily achieved.⁶² Ancient historians at least are aware of the extent of the problem: "The range of *amicitia* is vast"⁶³ and this is even more true of *philia*.⁶⁴ The word is used of alliances between states, of friendship between churches and of clandestine support in foreign states, and it functions as the ostensible motivation for the writing of books.⁶⁵ Military uses are common: Pollux's *Onomastikon* gives a great string of synonyms for *philia* of this kind, starting with *symmachia*.⁶⁶ And Kazhdan has shown how in Niketas Choniates the language of friendship most often reflects the ideology of feudalism.⁶⁷

In the personal sphere various shades of friendship can be detected. Psellos thought there were three: the best kind which was only available to intellectuals, a second-rate "friendliness" rather than friendship, and a very basic politeness.⁶⁸ Other writers echo Aristotle's distinction of the pleasant, the useful and the good friendship.⁶⁹

⁶² E. Schwimmer, "Friendship and Kinship: An Attempt to Relate Two Anthropological Concepts", in Leyton (ed.), *Compact*, p. 49.

⁶³ P. A. Brunt, "Amicitia in the Late Roman Republic", *Proc. Cambridge Philol. Soc.*, xcxi (1965), p. 20.

⁶⁴ The range of synonyms looks wider in Latin (*affectio*, *affectus*, *amor*, *dilectio*, *caritas*, *desiderium*, *amicitia*) than in Greek (*agape*, *eros*, *pathos*, *philia*), though it would be unwise to claim this without a semantic field study. On the relationship between *philia* and *amicitia*, see Fraisse, *Philia*, pp. 441-5. See the survey of research on the word *philos* by K. Strunk, *Indogermanische Forschungen*, lxxv (1970), pp. 315-22.

⁶⁵ For alliances between states and churches (both standard uses of *philia*) see the dictionaries of Liddell and Scott, and Lampe respectively; for *kryptoi philoi* (traitors), see F. Dvornik, *Origins of Intelligence Services: The Ancient Near East, Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, the Arab Muslim Empire, the Mongol Empire, China, Muscovy* (New Brunswick, 1974), pp. 146 ff.: I owe this reference to Mike McCormick; excuse for writing (or continuing) a book: for Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Prooimion, ed. J. Classen, i (C.S.H.B., Bonn, 1839), pp. 4-5.

⁶⁶ Pollux, *Onomastikon*, s.v. *philia*. It has not, I think, been noticed that three of the four most damning comments by Kekaumenos on friends occur in *military contexts*: the two wonderful stories about the strategos and the toparch, plus the advice not to accept the gifts of a krites (judge). In context Kekaumenos's strictures are absolutely consistent with his maintenance of a network of *philia*.

⁶⁷ Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium*, p. 28; Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, p. 109.

⁶⁸ See Ljubarskij, *Michail Psell*, pp. 117-29; Tinnefeld, "Freundschaft in den Briefen des Michael Psellos", for a full analysis.

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, VII.ii.9-iv.10 (1236a-9b); *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.iii.1-iv.5 (1156a-7b); Cicero, *De amicitia*, vi.22; Clement of Alexandria accepts the threefold distinction of *philian kat'areten*, *kat'amoiben*, *kat'edonen* (*ek sunetheias*) (goodness, utility and pleasure), as does Cassian, *Collatio XVI*, xiv, ed. M. Petchenig (Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum [hereafter C.S.E.L.], xiii, Vienna, 1866), pp. 448-9 (*caritas*, *affectio*, *societas*). For analysis of Ailred's types of friendship, see Fiske, *Friends and Friendship*, p. 18/36; see R. Paine, "Anthropological Approaches to Friendship", in Leyton (ed.), *Compact*, pp. 1-14; for a critique of this influential approach to friendship.

More useful for our purposes is the anthropologist's distinction between emotional friendship, instrumental friendship⁷⁰ and the "lop-sided friendship"⁷¹ which we call patronage. "The distinction between friendship and patronage is hard to draw",⁷² writes P. A. Brunt, particularly in societies like Rome under the principate, where to refer to someone as a client was insulting and to call him an *amicus* was not;⁷³ or modern Greece, where even commercial relations may be envisaged in terms of an exchange of favours among friends.⁷⁴ It seems clear that the pure type of emotional friendship practised, for example, among Guatemalan Indians, where an exclusive pair-bond is formed and broken by jealousy as a distinctive stage on the way from childhood to adulthood,⁷⁵ is not characteristic of Byzantine friendship. This is not to say that Byzantines did not use their emotions in their relations of friendship or couch their expressions of friendship in emotional terms, but it is arguable that instrumental friendship and patronage were more characteristic.

"Friendship", wrote Campbell, again of the Sarakatsanaioi, "begins when one man accepts a favour from another".⁷⁶ This seems very much in keeping with the concept of practical friendship examined above. But we should not be surprised to observe an instrumental friendship couched in the most idealistic terms of classical friendship-thinking: it is common in the Mediterranean for a person who does a favour to assert that they need no return, and it is insulting to suggest otherwise.⁷⁷ In republican Rome Cicero insisted on the highest standards of philosophical friendship, but a recent study identifies the fundamentally instrumental nature of Roman friendship, and indeed suggests that the Romans could hardly conceive of

⁷⁰ See E. R. Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies", in M. Banton (ed.), *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies* (London, 1966), pp. 1-22; R. Reina, "Patterns of Friendship in a Guatemalan Community", *Amer. Anthropologist*, lxi (1969), pp. 44-50; Cohen, "Patterns of Friendship". See R. Paine, "In Search of Friendship", *Man*, new ser., iv (1969), p. 505, for a blurring of the categories: "Is not all friendship ultimately instrumental?"

⁷¹ J. Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra* (London, 1954), p. 140.

⁷² P. A. Brunt, review of R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, 1982), *Times Lit. Suppl.*, 19 Nov. 1982, p. 1276.

⁷³ See the admirable analysis of Saller, *Personal Patronage*, pp. 8-11.

⁷⁴ Du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*, pp. 218-20; Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, pp. 254 ff.

⁷⁵ Reina, "Patterns of Friendship", pp. 45-9.

⁷⁶ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, p. 230; cf. Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, pp. 138 ff.

⁷⁷ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, p. 230; Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, pp. 138-9.

friendship without reciprocal exchange.⁷⁸ And it has been observed, particularly with respect to patronage, that a relationship which involves an emotional hold or shared ideals can expect more stability and enduring reciprocity.⁷⁹ In other words, it would work better.

A convenient distinction between instrumental friendship and patronage involves the concept of symmetry. Both instrumental friendship and patronage involve the reciprocal exchange of goods and services, both involve a personal relationship of some duration, but patronage also demands that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange.⁸⁰ In some societies the distinction between equals and unequals is clear: Campbell observes that a Sarakatsan client is described as *o anthropos mou*, whereas a villager is *o philos mou*.⁸¹ In Byzantium, although both words are used, for example by Kekaumenos,⁸² the distinctions are much harder to grasp. But when John Kamateros complains about friends because they deprive you of your property, that you waste all your substance on your friends and that those with friends deserve our pity, we may well be over the borderline into patronage.⁸³

⁷⁸ Saller, *Personal Patronage*, pp. 1-15. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII.26-8, discards Aristotle's subtype of utility, though in *De finibus*, I.xx, he accepts the pleasure principle; George Huxley points out that the importance of guest friendship in Greek society indicates that they could conceive of friendship without reciprocal exchange. For interesting insights suggesting that, while in one sense the lack of reciprocity defuses the potential hostility of the stranger, in another there is an exchange of honour and complementarity which is its own kind of reciprocity, see J. Pitt-Rivers, "The Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host: Introduction to the Laws of Hospitality", in J. Peristiany (ed.), *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology* (Paris and The Hague, 1968); *Anthropological Quart.*, xlvii (1974). For a study which persuasively views reciprocity as the core of *xenia* (which in Ancient Greek society is seen as an equivalent of compadrazgo), see now G. Herman, *Ritualized Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987), esp. p. 121: "On the other hand, expectations of reciprocity — whether immediate or delayed, whether in goods or in services — were built into almost every single utterance or gesture connected with the institution".

⁷⁹ On affect, see Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship and Patron-Client Relations", p. 13; Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, pp. 139-40; and the forthcoming study of Mary Beard on friendship in Cicero.

⁸⁰ On reciprocity, see particularly J. Pitt-Rivers, *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968), s.v. pseudo-kinship. On asymmetry, see Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship and Patron-Client Relations", pp. 16 ff.

⁸¹ Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, p. 233: "man" as against "friend".

⁸² Notably at #96, p. 40. The use of *anthropoi* in this passage underlines their dependent status. See Verpeaux, "Oikeioi", for a discussion of the word in the late Byzantine period; N. Oikonomides, *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals* (Washington, 1986), pp. 91, 93, 100, for personal seals belonging to persons describing themselves as *anthropoi* of the emperor.

⁸³ John Kamateros, *Eisagoge eis Astronomias*, 1651, 1671-2, ed. L. Weigl (Leipzig and Berlin, 1908), pp. 52-3.

Psellos tells us that a man who is *aprostateutos* (lacking a lord/protector) is a poor man because he has no influential friends. What influential friends can do is also clear from Psellos: they recommend a prelate or urge the employment of a *notarios* or the lightening of a tax burden on a friend.⁸⁴ Symeon the New Theologian gives the game away completely:

Who has never preferred a friend over one more worthy? Who does not strive to nominate as bishops his friends in order to receive all that will come to him? Who has never consecrated a bishop because of a request from those of the world, rulers, friends, the rich and the powerful?⁸⁵

And Psellos shows how status grows through patronage. Writing to Basil Maleses, he asks: "Is there a man happier than you, Maleses? See how you receive from me such requests and supplications as you would not have dreamt of".⁸⁶ This surely is patronage.

And so *philos* can mean ally, supporter, spy, backer, useful friend, patron and client. But all were recognizable as participants in a single relationship, heavily instrumental and with its own ceremonial. Friends ate, drank and talked together, stayed in each other's houses, wrote letters and sent gifts to one another,⁸⁷ and undertook obligations of ritual kinship with one another.⁸⁸

And beyond this widely practised ceremonial behaviour, for those who chose to use it, was the rhetorically formulated language of letter-friendship, to be used for states and churches as much as for bonds of personal friendship. The range of *philia* is truly great: as Kazhdan puts it, "The notion of *philia* was complicated in eleventh-century Byzantium: it involved elements both from the classical literary ideal

⁸⁴ Michael Psellos, ep. K-D. 69, ed. F. Kurtz and K. Drexler, in *Michaelis Pselli scripta minora*, ii (Milan, 1941), p. 154.

⁸⁵ Symeon the New Theologian, Hymn 58.171-81, iii, pp. 290-2.

⁸⁶ Michael Psellos, ep. K-D.132, p. 154.

⁸⁷ Cf. the criteria in J. P. Sutcliffe and B. D. Crabbe, "Incidence and Degrees of Friendship in Urban and Rural Areas", *Social Forces*, xlii (1963), p. 61.

⁸⁸ Here Kekaumenos's second story about the strategos and the toparch is significant (#74, pp. 27-8). This time each is determined to ensnare the other, each makes an offer of friendship accompanied by the appropriate gift. To gain a further advantage in maintaining the fiction of friendship, the strategos offers to sponsor the toparch's son in baptism; seeing his opportunity the toparch invites him to his house for the christening. The strategos of course is far too fly and they agree to meet on the borders of Byzantine territory. Each turns up having laid his ambush. Here we see the ceremonial of friendship exploited for temporary military advantage, but the ceremony was necessary for the fiction to convince. And perhaps this is the reason, as much as the concept of the Family of Kings, that the emperor baptizes foreign princes on their conversion.

of friendship and the harsh world of reality, where friends were allies and supporters as much as kindred spirits".⁸⁹

So in the light of this remark, the following tentative observations on Byzantine friendship can be offered: 1) Friendship was a widespread and valued (as well as feared) social glue in Byzantium, perhaps not as central to society as kinship, but a useful parallel none the less. 2) Friendships and relationships regarded as friendships formed a vast spectrum, but in general they were expected to work to the benefit of the friends, they all had access to a ceremonial of *philia* and, among the literati, to an inherited literary vocabulary. 3) (an even more tentative observation) Despite the reassessment which I have offered of the testimony of Symeon the New Theologian and Kekaumenos on *philia*, it may not be fortuitous that it is on these eleventh-century sources that Kazhdan bases his view. The sudden rash of discussion of friendship in the eleventh and twelfth centuries may be some indicator that friendships were seen as not working or, on the contrary, as working too well. It is easy to imagine why, in the context of remarkable social mobility in the eleventh century, the *philophilo*i of Psellos should have exploited the relationship to the full and why, in the dynastic jockeyings which preceded the inception of "clan" government under Alexios, friends might seem irrelevant.⁹⁰

These observations do not take us as far as we would wish. First, while some kind of pattern is clear, it is not clear that firm conclusions can yet be drawn, and whole areas of friendship in Byzantium are as yet uncharted: were there drinking-clubs in Byzantium like those in early Russia or comrades in arms like chivalric Europe? Is it possible to read back into Byzantium the relationships of spiritual brotherhood that appear in the folk-songs and clearly flourished under the *Tourko-kratia* (Turkish occupation)? How about village friendships and the friendships of women? And how about the origins of the *koumbaros* relationship?⁹¹

⁸⁹ Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium*, p. 28.

⁹⁰ See the collected wisdom of *Travaux et Mémoires*, vi (1976), esp. articles by Ahrweiler, Svoronos, Morrisson and Oikonomides; P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le xi^e siècle byzantin* (Paris, 1978). And note the role of friendship as ideology among new élites generally: "a means of expressing their new and special status; friendships between members of rising economically superior classes are critical in differentiating those members from lower strata. Friendship networks with people of the same status are the main means of confirming this status": Brain, *Friends and Lovers*, p. 254.

⁹¹ For drinking-clubs, see R. E. F. Smith and D. Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge, 1984), ch. 3, pp. 74-105, esp. pp. 79-85; for comrades in arms, see *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. M. Leach (Early English Text Soc., London, 1937); Brain, *Friends and Lovers*, pp. 27 ff. Neither

(cont. on p. 20)

Secondly, until these observations can be rooted firmly over the whole time-span of the Byzantine empire, their validity is limited. The eleventh century may well be a turning-point, but "there were different times and different groups and accordingly different attitudes towards *philia*".⁹²

Thirdly, our comprehension of Byzantine friendship will necessarily be superficial until we understand thoroughly the workings of patronage in Byzantine, and particularly in middle and later Byzantine, society. Despite all the work of the past fifty years on the Byzantine aristocracy and Byzantine feudalism, our knowledge of relative social status is patchy in the extreme,⁹³ and this knowledge is a prerequisite for detection of asymmetrical relationships. It is easy to spot candidates for clientage or patronage: the many in the fourth-century writings of Libanios and Symmachos; Basil and the widow Danêlis in the ninth century; the close relationship of Eustathios Boilas (will dated 1059) and his *doux* even after their land dispute.⁹⁴ But it is quite a different matter to analyse systematically all such links which appear in the sources.

(n. 91 cont.)

of the recent pioneering studies of Byzantine women (A. Laiou, "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society", *Jahrbuch für österreichischen byzantinistischen Gesellschaft*, xxxi (1981), pp. 233-60; J. Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach", in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London and Canberra, 1983), pp. 167-89) considers the question. One might consider this par for the course: cf. G. B. Ladner in his introduction to Fiske, "Survival and Development of the Ancient Concept of Friendship": "The sources tell us surprisingly little about friendships between nuns or other women"; and C. Du Bois, "The Gratuitous Act: An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Friendship Patterns", in Leyton (ed.), *Compact*, p. 27: "It is noteworthy how consistently all types of friendship . . . are found to be both empirically and normatively more significant for men than for women"; but Judith Herrin tells me that there is considerable hagiographic material so far unnoticed on the friendship of women. And for the *koumbaros* relationship, see n. 25.

⁹² Private communication of A. P. Kazhdan.

⁹³ The literature is vast. G. Ostrogorsky, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine* (Brussels, 1954); Z. V. Udal'cova, "K voprosy o genezise feodalizma v Vizantii" [On the Question of the Genesis of Feudalism in Byzantium], *Vizantijskie ocerki* (Moscow, 1971); E. Patlagean, "'Economie paysanne' et 'féodalité byzantine'", *Annales E.S.C.*, xxx (1975), pp. 1371-96, are highlights. One of the few failings of Angold (ed.), *Byzantine Aristocracy* is that it fails to grasp this nettle. See, however, Magdalino, "Oikos", following G. Weiss, *Johannes Kantakuzenos Aristokraat, Staatsman, Kaiser und Mönch in der Gesellschaftsentwicklung von Byzanz im 14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1969) (impressive on the following of Kantakuzenos), in a radically new approach.

⁹⁴ The early Byzantine examples from the sources can be paralleled by archaeological evidence; Simon Ellis points out that the large audience chambers of early Byzantine private houses do not outlive the death of the old aristocracy. For Basil and the widow, see Theophanes Continuatus, v.11, ed. I. Bekker (C.S.H.B., Bonn, 1838), pp. 226 ff.; for Eustathios Boilas, see his will, in Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 20 ff.; and S. Vryonis, "The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathios Boilas (1059)", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xi (1957), pp. 264-6, 272.

Finally, it is not at all clear that we are as yet methodologically equipped for such an analysis. It is possible to make some progress towards devising techniques for detecting relationships between Byzantine writers and their associates. In certain periods (the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries)⁹⁵ there is a sufficient amount of literary and rhetorical evidence, and literary society seems close-knit enough for us to be able to reconstruct a partial nexus of social relationships. Once the material has been collected and reduced to diagrammatic form, various questions may be asked of it.

First,⁹⁶ we need to know quite simply who knew whom. Secondly,⁹⁷ we need to define types of relationship and multiplexity: to distinguish links of kinship from those of teaching, those of spiritual parentage from literary parentage, instrumental friendship from personal patronage. Once we have isolated patronage relationships⁹⁸ we need to examine how in any given case they were made to work: for example, it is possible to analyse Theophylact of Ochrid's handling of the case of the episcopal village of Ekklesiai.⁹⁹ And finally, we need to assess the very tricky question of intimacy, an indicator of the qualitative nature of a relationship.¹⁰⁰

These questions are faced also by social anthropologists working on networks,¹⁰¹ and an application of their methods has shown some profit.¹⁰² The biggest problem is that of the nature of the sources;

⁹⁵ In contrast to, say, the eleventh century. For the twelfth, see my "Theophylact through his Letters", fig. II, pp. 814-47, which I hope to expand into a book on Comnenian literary society; for the fourteenth, the groundwork has been done by Ševčenko, "Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century".

⁹⁶ Cf. J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford, 1974), fig. 2.1, p. 26.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, fig. 2.2, p. 29.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, fig. 2.5, p. 36.

⁹⁹ See my "Theophylact through his Letters", Section III, ch. 4, pp. 540-5 and my paper to the Twentieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, March 1986, "Patronage in Action: The Problems of an Eleventh-Century Bishop", in R. Morris (ed.), *Church and People in Byzantium*, forthcoming. I hope to publish shortly a methodological study on detection of relationships in twelfth-century literary texts.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends*, fig. 2.10, p. 47; E. Bott, *Family and Social Network* (London, 1957), pp. 58-9: "the analysis of social networks is only a first step. It will be necessary to define degrees of intimacy and obligation of the various relationships".

¹⁰¹ See, as well as Boissevain, *Friends of Friends*, J. Boissevain and J. C. Mitchell, (eds.), *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction* (The Hague and Paris, 1973); J. C. Mitchell (ed.), *Social Networks in Urban Situations* (Manchester, 1969); M. Banton (ed.), *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies* (A.S.A. Monographs, iv, London, 1966). S. Leinhardt, *Social Networks: A Developing Paradigm* (New York, 1977) is a useful reader.

¹⁰² See my forthcoming "Patronage in Action", for a study of the use of network in a village in eleventh-century Macedonia; my *The Letters of Theophylact of Ochrid: Text and Context in Byzantium and Bulgaria, c. 1100* (Birmingham Byzantine Series, (cont. on p. 22)

our records cannot measure up to field notebooks. Not all of our sources are of equal value; of middle Byzantine genres¹⁰³ by far the most useful is the letter. It brings, of course, its own problems — the illusory charge of intimacy the genre carries with it¹⁰⁴ — and not every Byzantine intellectual has left a letter-collection. But like no other source a letter-collection can show up like a stain on a microscope slide the social and ceremonial relations of individuals. It is true that this approach, while particularly useful for analysis of literary society, throws us back among just that section of society we have been at pains to avoid. But perhaps we cannot afford such snobbery: if we accept that writers occupied many positions in society¹⁰⁵ and adopt the methods of Kazhdan in what he calls “social localization”¹⁰⁶ we may be able to use their evidence none the less. And to exclude all literary evidence is an impossibility in the study of Byzantium. On the contrary, it is the student who learns to penetrate the language and ceremonial of friendship and patronage who will reach the reality of *philia* in Byzantium.¹⁰⁷

Given this importance of the literary stratum of Byzantine friendship, we should return to our starting-point and ask again why we have no *De spirituali amicitia* in twelfth-century Byzantium. First of

(n. 102 cont.)

ii, London, forthcoming), for a study of one man's patronage network; and (in progress) a complete network analysis of twelfth-century literary society. This present article is a necessary methodological preliminary to these studies.

¹⁰³ Pace Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, p. viii, “an author — even a Byzantine author — deserves to be regarded as an entity, not to be torn to pieces in the interests of proving the eternal stability of genres”, the study of genres is an essential stage in the decoding of the development of Byzantine rhetorical literature.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Morey and Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and his Letters*, p. 13: “A kindly, diplomatic and charitable man like Peter the Venerable seems to be on terms of close friendship with everyone in Christendom”.

¹⁰⁵ A. P. Kazhdan, “Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte”, *Jahrbuch für österreichischen byzantinistischen Gesellschaft*, xxviii (1979), p. 12; Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium*, pp. 101-3; M. E. Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople”, in Angold (ed.), *Byzantine Aristocracy*, pp. 184-7.

¹⁰⁶ Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, p. viii. For a devastatingly thorough example of the technique in action, see “The Social Views of Michael Attaleiates”, *ibid.*, pp. 23-86.

¹⁰⁷ I am aware of the difficulties but also of the responsibility; see J. Waterbury, “An Attempt to Put Patrons and Clients in their Place”, in Gellner and Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients*, p. 341: “For the concept of patronage to become something more than a residual category or a phenomenon so ubiquitous as to deprive it of any analytic utility, it is important to join the examination of any of its discrete manifestations with that of the general politico-economic context in which it is formed. This context can ‘explain’ the characteristics of patronage rather than the other way round”.

all, the Greek tradition is more uncompromising on this issue than the Latin. St. Basil said:

There is but one escape from all this: separation from the world altogether. But withdrawal from the world does not mean bodily removal from it, but the severance of the soul from sympathy with the body and the giving up of city, home, personal possessions, love of friends, property, means of subsistence, business, social relations and knowledge derived from human teaching, and it also means the readiness to receive in one's heart the impressions engendered there by divine instruction.¹⁰⁸

For Basil as for Symeon the New Theologian friendship was a pillar of the world. For Cassian, for Anselm and for Ailred a higher, spiritual kind of friendship was a real possibility. But the Byzantines were aware of the dangers of monastic friendships.¹⁰⁹ John Moschos conveys the inconvenience and atmosphere which might be created by a tiff between two *gerontes* in a community,¹¹⁰ and Symeon indulges himself in a description of "loving brothers", a satire worthy of Eustathios of Thessalonike or John Tzetzes:¹¹¹ they invite each other to their cells, eat a little, drink a little, miss an office, drink a little more, gossip a little more until they are quite incapable of penitence and have probably slandered half the monastery.¹¹² Symeon's own relationships with Symeon the Studite and with Niketas Stethatos are not simply an exclusive form of friendship; they are

¹⁰⁸ Basil, ep. 2, ed. and trans. R. J. Deferrari (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1961), i, pp. 10-11; cf. Luke xiv.26, xviii.29. For a contrary interpretation which derives Cassian's openness to monastic friendship from Evagrius and Basil, see Fiske, *Friends and Friendship*, pp. 3/1-2; A. M. Fiske, "The Survival and Development of the Ancient Concept of Friendship in the Early Middle Ages", *Amer. Benedictine Rev.*, xiv (1961), pp. 190-1.

¹⁰⁹ The Rule of St. Benedict is silent on this danger, although D. Roby, *Aelred of Rievaulx: Spiritual Friendship* (Cistercian Fathers, v, Kalamazoo, 1977), p. 40, argues that there are indications of a later concern. On the dangers of "particular friendships", see B. P. McGuire, "Monastic Friendship and Toleration in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Life", in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition* (Studies in Church History, xxii, London, 1985), pp. 147-60, esp. pp. 148-50, in which, as well as homosexuality and cliques, he singles out the bonds of the world as causes of that concern. Many closed societies are similarly wary of personal friendships: see V. Aubert and O. Arner, "On the Social Structure of the Ship", *Acta Sociologica*, iii (1958), pp. 203 ff.; S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Themes in the Social Sciences, Cambridge, 1984), pp. 286-8.

¹¹⁰ Literally "old men", but in standard use for monks, like *adelphos*, brother: see R. Maisano, "Sull'uso del termine adelphos nel Prato di Giovanni Mosco", *Koinonia*, vi (1982), pp. 147-54. John Moschos, *Pratum spirituale*, #119 (P.G., lxxxvii.3, Paris, 1863), cols. 3109-12.

¹¹¹ On anti-clerical satire in the twelfth century, see P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Saint in the Twelfth Century", in S. Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (Studies Supplementary to Sobornost, v, London, 1981), pp. 51-66.

¹¹² Symeon the New Theologian, Catechesis 4, *Peri metanoias kai katanyxeos*, ed. B. Krivocheine, i (Sources chrétiennes, xcvi, Paris, 1963), pp. 334-40.

quite distinct in that the son is totally subordinate to the spiritual father¹¹³ and charming Eadmer-like relationships would only have been a distraction.

But there is one last reason for the difference between Rievaulx and St. Mamas (or Stoudios) which I think is quite clear in Symeon's writings. Friendship was too important *in the world* to be the excited discovery of a scholarly monastery. It is not a matter of the reading of Cicero or the reception of Plato and Aristotle, but that friendship fulfilled a functional role in eastern society for which there was no place in the west with its formal feudal ties.¹¹⁴ Colin Morris makes a very good case for the political significance of friendship in the reform movement of the twelfth century,¹¹⁵ but this is trivial beside the part played by friendship in Byzantium. There friendship filled a gap and gave a "tolerable emotional casing"¹¹⁶ to functional relationships spun from necessity, competition and insecurity.

The Queen's University of Belfast

M. E. Mullett

¹¹³ On the nature of the relationship of spiritual father to spiritual son, see I. Hausherr, *Direction spirituelle en orient autrefois* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, cxliv, Rome, 1955); R. Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century", in Hackel (ed.), *Byzantine Saint*, pp. 43-50; Rev. H. J. M. Turner, "Spiritual Fatherhood in Symeon the New Theologian" (Univ. of Manchester Ph.D. thesis, 1985).

¹¹⁴ But see J. Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985), esp. ch. 2, for a perceptive treatment of the part played by friendship and ritual kinship in the traditional Christianity of late medieval western society.

¹¹⁵ Morris, *Discovery of the Individual*, pp. 103-4; I. S. Robinson, "The Friendship Network of Gregory VII", *History*, lxiii (1978), pp. 1-22.

¹¹⁶ Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship and Patron-Client Relations", p. 13.



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"Thou Shalt Not Eat the Hyena". A Note on "Barnabas" Epistle 10.7

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**“THOU SHALT NOT EAT THE HYENA”
A NOTE ON “BARNABAS” *EPISTLE* 10.7**

BY

MARY PENDERGRAFT

A major aim of the *Epistle* attributed to Barnabas is to demonstrate to Christians that the Jews have erred in interpreting Hebrew scripture literally and that the correct, “spiritual” interpretation depends on correctly deciphering its allegorical expression.¹ Thus, the discussion of dietary laws in Chapter 10 with their somewhat surprising explanations is consistent with the overall goal of the *Epistle*. Yet it is well known that many of the restrictions here cited do not derive from the Mosaic law, although they often reflect beliefs held widely in the Hellenistic world.² This note will address one of these alleged prohibitions in particular: the eating of hyena meat (10.7). Here is the text:

Ἄλλὰ οὐδὲ τὴν ὕαιναν φάγη. οὐ μὴ, φησὶν, γένη μοιχὸς οὐδὲ φθορεὺς οὐδὲ ὁμοιωθήσῃ τοῖς τοιούτοις. Πρὸς τί; ὅτι τὸ ζῶον τοῦτο παρ’ ἐνιαυτὸν ἀλλάσσει τὴν φύσιν καὶ ποτὲ μὲν ἄρρεν, ποτὲ δὲ θῆλυ γίνεται.

“And do not eat the hyena. Do not, he says, be an adulterer or a corrupter or make yourself like such people. Why? Because this creature yearly changes its nature and is sometimes male and sometimes female.”³

This belief, as unlikely as it appears to a modern reader, recurs in a variety of ancient sources: Aesop (242 and 243 Perry, p. 416), Aelian (*Nat. An.* 1.25), Ps-Clement (*Recog.* 8.25), Oppian (*Cyn.* 3.288-92), Ovid (*Met.* 15.408-10), Photius (*Bibl.* 244.379a18), Pliny (*NH* 8.44), and Tertullian (*de Pallio* 3.2).⁴ Aristotle (*HA* 579b 15-30 and *GA* 757a 2-13) couples with this “fact” a similar one, that each hyena bears both male and female genitalia, which probably gave rise to the more complicated sex-change belief. He disproves both of these beliefs by means of the observation of hyena carcasses, and he thinks he has located the source of the misapprehension in the existence of an extra “line” (γράμμη) in the animal’s genital region, a passage with no outlet.⁵ Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 2.10.83-88) cites our passage [he is the

first to do so, and so helps in dating the Epistle⁶] but he has evidently read Aristotle as well: “Moses’” prohibition, he explains, has a different basis and aim from that adduced by “Barnabas”. Clement doesn’t believe in annual gender-transformation but he does believe that the hyena possesses the false orifice described by Aristotle. Consequently, he interprets this law as a prohibition of two practices he considers characteristic of the hyena, non-procreative sex, and in particular, male homosexuality.

The modern reader naturally questions why such unlikely notions persisted so widely and so long if simple observation, as Aristotle tried to demonstrate, would prove its error. Answers to that question might take any of several points of view.

In the first place, hyenas were generally considered uncanny in many other respects: we read that they can imitate human speech (often with the goal of luring men to their deaths), that their shadow can cause dumbness in dogs, that their left paw can put animals or men to sleep, and that they can transfix victims by gazing at them three times. Robert Gordon has shown that in general, hyenas are considered to possess traits similar to those of witches.⁷ That they also had preternatural sexual traits is, for the ancients, therefore, not surprising, but in fact part of their generally anomalous character.

Next, the possibility that an individual could partake of both genders or could change his gender appears to have intrigued the ancient world. In a society where gender played a major role in determining one’s identity and place in the community, and where men’s and women’s lives were clearly differentiated, a figure who defied such classification provoked strong responses, as Marie Delcourt’s studies have shown us.⁸ The hermaphrodite encountered in life evoked horror and repugnance, as we see from the accounts of exile, drowning, or burning alive in Pliny (*NH* 7.36⁹), Livy (27.37.5-7; 31.12.6-10), and Diodorus Siculus (32.12), respectively. In contrast, myth often connects changes of sex with the possession of other extraordinary abilities (*e.g.*, indirectly, Tiresias’ gift of prophecy, *Met.* 3.323-38) or views them as the result of the special favor of the gods (again from Ovid, Hermaphroditus [*Met.* 4.288-388], Caeneus [*Met.* 12.172-209, and see 8.305], Iphis [*Met.* 9.666-797]).¹⁰ Cult knew of bisexual gods, especially in the myths of the Orphics, and in art, too, such figures often carried a religious significance and suggestion of power.

There is, moreover, a more objective, “biological” explanation for

this persistent belief. Aristotle probably saw a striped hyena (*hyaena hyaena*), native to north and east Africa, India, and southwest Asia—thus more easily accessible to a researcher in Asia Minor or Greece—and for it his observations are largely true, although his deceptive “line” remains a mystery. But in the case of another member of the family *hyaenidae* observation does not make things quite as clear. The spotted hyena (*crocota crocuta*) inhabits sub-Saharan Africa,¹¹ farther from the areas in which Aristotle traveled, and it appears, to a casual and to a not-so-casual observer, to be hermaphroditic. To speak more accurately, the external genitalia of the male and female are nearly identical. “The external genitals of the female are striking in that they exactly resemble those of the male. The clitoris resembles a penis and is in the same position, capable of similar erection; two sacs filled with fibrous tissue look very much like the scrotum.”¹² Furthermore, the female is larger and more aggressive than the male, unlike humans and thus contrary to “common-sense”; consequently, the two are likely to be identified wrongly.

This phenomenon is related to high levels of male hormones in the blood of the females.¹³ The resulting masculine-like organs play a major role in the meeting ceremony that takes place between hyenas of all ages and sexes. After even a brief separation, a hyena will raise his—or her—leg and offer his—or her—erect genitals to a fellow for sniffing.¹⁴

Contemporary zoologists find it difficult to determine the gender of most hyenas without recourse to bloodtests or dissection. A non-specialist observing a pregnant or lactating female who also carried organs resembling a penis and testicles might well conclude that he saw a bisexual creature. Travelers’ tales describing this extraordinary beast would thus carry the force of conviction because they stem from a genuine observation and not from imagination. They would find in the Greco-Roman world a climate of belief where such anomalies were already accepted in myth and cult. Consequently, as we saw, this belief in the hermaphroditic hyena and its elaboration, annual changes of gender, persisted stubbornly despite Aristotle’s refutation.

Modern readers often dismiss statements like this claim of the hyena’s bisexuality as naive assumptions and investigate them no further. It is salutary, therefore, to realize that a belief as startling as yearly gender changes can be shown to be grounded in fact, first of all, and even more important, that its persistence reveals interesting assumptions of ancient thought.

NOTES

¹ In such allegorical readings he was preceded by two Jewish writers, Aristean and Philo: S. Stein, "The Dietary Laws in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature," *Studia Patristica* 2 (= TU 64) (1957) 141-54.

² Pierre Prigent, *Épître de Barnabé* (Paris 1971 = Sources Chrétiennes 172) notes *ad loc.*; Robert A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary. 3. Barnabas and Didache* (New York 1965) *ad loc.*; Francesco Scorza Barcellona, *Epistola di Barnaba* (Turin 1975), notes *ad loc.* and pp. 148-49. Stein (*op. cit.*) notes that in many cultures such prohibitions reflect not figurative but literal fear of "infection" with the undesirable qualities.

³ As the commentators point out this is logical only if φθορεύς = *homosexual* "corrupter" as it does in Clement (see below).

⁴ The frequency of alternation becomes every six months for Elias (*In Porphyrii isagogen* 68.12 [A.D. 6th c.]), and is unspecified in Horapollo (*Hieroglyphica* 2.69.2-3 [AD 4th-5th cent.]). Aristotle's explanation is followed by Philoponus (*in GA* 14.3.149).

⁵ Pliny (*loc. cit.*) betrays a certain confusion when he comments that Aristotle refuted annual change of gender and parthenogenesis, whereas he specifically addressed only the question of double gender, leaving the others to be answered by implication. In fact, Prigent (note *ad loc.*) repeats Pliny's statement, perpetuating the confusion. For a similar rejection based on common sense see Diodorus Siculus 32.12.2-3, where he refers to a belief that couples bisexuality with annual alternation of sexual roles.

⁶ An unattributed paraphrase is found in Methodius, *Symposium*, 5.125.

⁷ These details and others come from Aelian (*Nat. An.* 6.14, 7.22) and Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 8.44). R. L. Gordon discusses these traits and the consequent similarity of hyenas to witches, in explaining Pallas' declaration [in Porphyry, *de abstinentia* 4.16] that in the all-male world of the Mithras cult "they called women hyenas": "Reality, Evocation and Boundary in the Mysteries of Mithras," *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 3 (1980) 19-99, esp. 57-62. Gordon coins the useful term "Graeco-Roman encyclopaedia" for widely held beliefs of this sort. He doesn't, however, mention the "biological" explanation which will follow in this note. In this connection it will be useful to the note that the very word ὅλκινα is "properly a feminine of ὄλκ" (*LSJ ad voc.*).

⁸ Marie Delcourt has explored these issues in detail in *Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity* (trans. J. Nicholson, London 1961), and *Hermaphroditea. Recherches sur l'être double promoteur de la fertilité dans la monde classique* (Collection Latomus 86, Brussels 1966).

⁹ But see 7.35, "olim...in prodigiis habitos, nunc vero in deliciis," for evidence that attitudes were flexible.

¹⁰ The case of Sithon is mentioned only briefly at *Met.* 4.280-81, with no circumstantial information.

¹¹ *Academic American Encyclopedia* 10 (1987) 344.

¹² Hans Kruuk, *The Spotted Hyena* (Chicago 1972) 210. The pioneering research was that of L. Harrison Matthews, "Reproduction in the Spotted Hyaena, *crocota crocota* (Erxleben)," *Philos. Trans. of the Royal Society of London* 230 (1939) 1-78. A. L. Peck cited this article in relation to Aristotle's comments in *G. A.* in his Loeb edition of 1943, p. 565.

¹³ Even in cubs still *in utero*. P. A. Racey and J. D. Skinner, "Endocrine Aspects of Sex-

ual Mimicry in Spotted Hyenas, *crocuta crocuta*,” *Journal of Zoology (London)*, 187 (1979) 315-26.

¹⁴ Kruuk, *op. cit.* 211-30. Zoologists find here a “chicken or egg” puzzle—did the physical adaptation encourage the development of this ritual, or did it result from it: Stephen Jay Gould, “Hyena Myths and Realities,” *Natural History* 90.2 (1981) 16, 18, 24.

Dept. of Classical Languages

Wake Forest University

Winston-Salem NC 27109-7343, U.S.A.



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Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26–27*

Mark D. Smith

IT IS WITH genuine trepidation that I enter the arena to contend with those who have been grappling with the issue of the ordination of self-affirming homosexuals¹ for the better part of two decades. Nearly all major Christian denominations have struggled with this question, in one form or another, and the future promises no respite.² I do not intend to add fuel to homophobic fires, nor do I wish to lend credence to those who would make theology the feeble puppet of cultural whim. Rather, I hope to lift the current dialogue to a higher level by paying close attention to recent studies of ancient sexuality which have raised our awareness of the cultural attitudes and assumptions that characterized the world of the first Christians and influenced the writings of the New Testament.

Mark D. Smith is Associate Professor of History at Albertson College, Caldwell, ID 83605-4494.

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¹ I employ the term "homosexual" with some misgivings. This etymological anomaly, built of mixed Latin and Greek roots, is the creation of the past century. Ancient Greeks and Romans had no equivalent term. Further, this term is very problematic when used to define persons, groups, or lifestyles. I therefore agree with Boswell (1980:41) that is better to avoid its use whenever possible, though I do not think his substitution of "gay" helps to alleviate the problems. I have here employed "homosexual" in a very specific and limited sense, to refer only to the *behavior* of engaging in sexual activity with persons of the same sex. "Bisexuality" refers to the practice of one person, either male or female, engaging in sexual activity with both men and women.

² For the debates through the early 1980s, see Scroggs 1983:1–16. For the continuation of dialogue, see PCUSA, ELCA, 1993 and 1994; cf. Fulkerson.

Most scholars agree that one of the more important issues in the modern debate is the portrayal of homosexuality in the Bible. All of the biblical passages that have been purported to mention homosexual activity pose significant interpretive difficulties.³ The clearest, at least at first blush, is Rom. 1:26–27, which is widely considered the linchpin of the discussion: “For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural (*para physin*), and in the same way (*homoiōs*) also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error” (NRSV). A cursory reading of this text has led many interpreters to believe that Paul considers homosexual behavior to be sinful. A cursory reading, however, is not sufficient for understanding Paul’s meaning, for many have come to quite different conclusions. If there is any hope of resolving these differences of opinion, it is important to understand the place of these verses in the argument of Rom. 1:18–3:20 and the ancient assumptions about sexuality that lurk behind them.

I do not wish to indulge in yet another lengthy discussion of the structure of Paul’s argument, which has been done admirably by several scholars (Hays; Scroggs 1983: 109–118; Furnish: 72ff.; Schmidt: 64–85). Some basics, however, cannot be avoided. Vv. 26–27 are an integral part of the structural unit of 1:18–32, tied together by the device of a three-fold “exchange,” followed in each case by the phrase “God gave them up” (vv. 23–28). In Paul’s treatment of the causes and effects of idolatry, his argument progresses from a discussion of idolatry in general as distorted worship, to sexual sin as distorted use of the body, to various social sins as distorted relationships with others and the world. Paul is using this exploration of human evils as a rhetorical tool to prepare for his transition in 2:1: “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else” (NIV). Although this may be a reference to Jews, it is not necessarily so. Paul explicitly places Jews in the same boat at 2:9. The point of Rom. 1:18–3:20 is that all are sinners; none has a right to treat another as morally inferior before God. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Paul’s words in 1:18–32 are merely rhetorical and not a reflection of his ethical ideals. This passage is not devoted to ethical admonition, for Paul’s point is primarily theological. But, the ethical standards implicit in 1:18–32 are nonetheless Paul’s and not a mere rhetorical flourish, as he makes explicit in 2:1: the person who is inclined to judge the sinners of ch. 1 is guilty of “doing the very same things” (NRSV). All, Jews and Greeks alike, are under the power of sin (3:9, 23).

³ The number of passages in the Bible that deal with homosexuality is disputed. The twelve most commonly cited are: Gen. 19:4–11; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17; 1Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2Kings 23:7; Judg. 19:22–30; Rom. 1:26–27; 1Cor. 6:9–10; 1Tim. 1:8–11.

The vices catalogued in 1:18–32 are, in context, merely symptoms of a more systemic infection, the most primal of all sins: “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator”(1:25 NRSV). The vices of ch. 1 are, therefore, not causes but effects, illustrative of the behavior of all people who have, in myriad different ways, turned away from God. But, for Paul, these are vices nonetheless, empirical evidence of human sinfulness and the human need for God’s grace. Paul is not engaging in an exacting examination of each type of sin, but rather pointing up the desperate situation of an unredeemed humanity. Paul is expressly condemning each of the vices listed, but he does not elaborate on them, and he does not treat any one as more heinous than the rest.

Most of the recent discussion of this passage has centered around the two most important scholarly works published on the subject: John Boswell’s *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* and Robin Scroggs’s *The New Testament and Homosexuality*. Boswell argues that “the persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons.”⁴ Therefore, according to Boswell, those who are homosexual by orientation and engage in homosexual acts are not included in Paul’s denunciation. Boswell’s work is an important scholarly contribution that has helped push discussion onto a higher plane. His interpretations of biblical texts, however, including Rom. 1, have been justly criticized, both because of his anachronistic importation of the modern concept of an inherent sexual orientation (something no ancient Greek or Roman was familiar with)⁵ and because of his lack of sophistication in matters of

⁴ Boswell 1980:109 is not unique in offering this problematic interpretation. His discussion depends heavily on Bailey: 157; cf. Edwards: 98–99.

⁵ Boswell (1980: 109) asserts that the concept of sexual orientation was commonplace among Greeks and Romans, though he does not provide any documentation in support of this assertion. There are, however, four sources that appear to imply that a person’s attraction to persons of the same sex may be a life-long condition determined before birth. In passages that we will discuss in more detail below, both Aristophanes (in Plato’s *Symposium* 189c–193d) and Phaedrus (in his *Liber Fabularum* 4.16) offer mythological accounts of the origins of human sexuality; in both cases sexual propensities result from divine activity. Since, however, both texts were intended to be humorous, poking fun at those who continue to engage in homosexual behavior as middle-aged adults, it is unwise to treat them as serious philosophical explanations of sexuality, especially since their assumptions and myths are not corroborated elsewhere (cf. Halperin: 18ff.). In addition, Brooten (1990: 83) cites two astrologists who treat homosexuality as foreordained and unalterable behavior (Vettius Valens, *Anthologiai* 1.1 §13; 2.17 §66; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.13 §160, cf. 4.5 §187f.). Since, however, all things are foreordained for the serious astrologist, homosexual behavior is no more, and no less, determined than, for instance, the person one might marry. None of these sources can be considered representative of a general attitude in the Greco-Roman world, and none adequately parallels the modern concept of sexual orientation. Ironically, the modern concept and language of an inherent sexual orientation has recently made its way into American courts, at the same time that some in the modern Gay Rights movement have come to reject the concept as oversimplified and demeaning (e.g., Kelly); cf. Schmidt: 131–59.

lexicography. Most recent scholars agree that Boswell's interpretation of Rom. 1:26–27 is untenable.⁶

More important and more significant is the work of Robin Scroggs. I do not believe it is possible to lavish too much praise upon Scroggs for his contribution to the modern discussion. His irenic tone, linguistic and literary sophistication, and clarity of presentation make his work a model of biblical and historical scholarship with a practical edge. He has the knack of asking the right questions and pointing his audience in the right direction for answers. Scroggs proposes the parameters for precisely how the discussion of biblical texts can be used to illuminate the modern practical and political debate within ecclesiastical bodies: one must: 1) do the work of exegesis to understand the meaning of biblical statements in their historical and literary context; 2) compare the specific meaning of the texts with the major theological and ethical themes of the Bible; and 3) determine whether the cultural context addressed in the text bears a reasonable similarity to the modern context in which it is to be applied (1983: 123).

With these parameters in mind Scroggs turns to the exegesis of Rom. 1. He argues that this passage must be interpreted in light of what Paul knew of the sexual practices of the Greco-Roman world, for he could only condemn behavior with which he was familiar. How can we know what Paul may or may not have known? Scroggs displays his penchant for looking in the right places for answers by embarking upon a lengthy examination of homosexual practices in the ancient world (leaning heavily on the first edition of Kenneth Dover's magisterial work) and the attitudes toward such practices among Jews (17–98). After analyzing his collection of evidence, Scroggs concludes that the only "model" of homosexual relationships in existence in the Greco-Roman world was pederasty, literally, "the love of boys," which he defines as a "relationship between a male adult or older youth, and a boy or younger youth. One partner, almost always the older, assumed the role of the active partner; the other, almost always the younger, that of the passive" (18, 34–35, 139). If Paul knew only the "model" of pederasty, his words in Rom. 1 can only be interpreted as a proscription of that ancient practice, not as a condemnation of mutually consenting, adult homosexual relationships such as are widely publicized in modern American culture (42–43, 126). Therefore, Rom. 1 (as well as all other alleged New Testament references to homosexual activity) speaks to the condition of a culture far removed from our own and is irrelevant to the modern debate.

⁶ See esp. Hays 184–215; cf. Wright 1984: 125–153; Scroggs (1983: 28 n. 39) responds, "This exegesis . . . seems forced to me;" cf. R. Goss: 92. Boswell has received high praise as an historian, much of which is warranted. It is important to note, however, that Boswell was a *medieval* historian. I have serious reservations about his argument that early Christians had a highly tolerant attitude toward homosexual practices. The evidence he cites does not support his conclusions. For further discussion, see Wright 1989: 329–334.

Scroggs's book embodies every virtue save one, that of being right. His conclusions are flawed, primarily because of his selective use of the evidence for ancient homosexual practices. As a result, he does not adequately or accurately present the cultural climate of which Paul was a part and which formed the basis of what Paul knew and rejected.

Whereas Scroggs has posed the right questions and presented the right parameters for answering them, he has not completed the task he set himself. In particular, there are three issues with which Scroggs has not adequately dealt: 1) the definition of pederasty; 2) evidence for non-pederastic homosexual practices in the Greco-Roman world; and 3) the evidence for and implications of ancient female homosexual activity. A close analysis of these three topics will demonstrate that Paul probably knew more than Scroggs would have us believe.

WHAT IS PEDERASTY?

Expanding on the definition cited above, Scroggs clarifies his conception of pederasty:

1. In the typical romantic relationship, the beloved is most often a boy or youth around the age of puberty extending at times into the late teens.
2. The lover is most likely to be an adult, probably older than twenty years, the upper age extending indefinitely, at times to middle age and even beyond.
3. There are enough variations of the above to blur the focus of the picture. [There] may well be exceptions . . . Historical reality can never be completely captured by generalizations.
4. What *does* seem constant, no matter how much the typical age differential was modified in specific instances, is the acceptance of the roles of active and passive by the partners . . .
5. Apart from certain exceptions of an adult male prostitute who retains his passive (or perhaps also active) role well into adulthood . . . *I know of no suggestions in the texts that homosexual relationships existed between same-age adults.* (34–35, emphasis his)

Scroggs further suggests that, "if we interpret pederasty supplely enough to include the continuation of that model into these borderline cases [such as same-age youths as lovers and adults taking the role of beloved], then it is certain that pederasty was the only *model* in existence in the world of this time" (139, emphasis his). In addition, Scroggs claims that pederastic relationships were characterized by "inequality," "impermanency," and the potential for "humiliation": "Most forms of pederasty had at least the *potential* to create concrete relations that would be destructive and dehumanizing to the participants, particularly the youths. Given this potential and its frequent actualization, that early Christians should repudiate all forms of pederasty is not unduly surprising" (36–37, 43, emphasis his).

For Scroggs, pederasty is far more than a mere description of behavior; it is a sexual "model," a cultural construct which includes pat-

terns of behavior that are considered appropriate, concepts of normal and abnormal activity, and a cultural ideal of beauty. For the Greeks, pederasty was considered normal and, within certain legal and customary bounds, appropriate. The Greeks had no parallel to the modern idea that homosexuals should remain in the "closet." The Greek ideal of beauty was the youthful male (27–29).

It is important to note the careful wording of Scroggs's definition of pederasty. Each step of the way, he leaves room for exceptions to his rule. What has he really said? There may be an age distinction, but maybe not. There will frequently be exploitation, but maybe not. He claims that he knows of no indications of homosexual relationships between same-age adults, yet he later adds a discussion of "adult *erōmenoi*"—adults who act as passive partners with other adults of the same gender, a practice he attempts to subsume under his pederastic "model" (135ff.). In the end, Scroggs's definition of pederasty leaves us with one irreducible characteristic: the active/passive distinction between sexual partners. Such a definition is extremely problematic for three reasons: It is inconsistent with his argument concerning Paul's meaning in Rom. 1; it does not correspond to the meaning of the term *paiderastia* as it was used among ancient Greeks; and it is a definition unique to Scroggs—none of the experts on the subject, including those upon whom Scroggs depends for much of his information, defines pederasty as broadly as he does.

Scroggs's primary argument is that Paul only condemned pederasty in Rom. 1, and primarily its more dehumanizing characteristics (127–128). Assuming that this argument is true, based upon Scroggs's definition of pederasty, what does this conclusion mean? Presumably, that Paul only meant to condemn homosexual activities that included an active/passive distinction between partners. Such a conclusion is not very significant and does not support the application Scroggs makes of it. Active/passive distinctions between male homosexual lovers have been commonplace in every culture for which we have any evidence of homosexual activity in history, including our own. In fact, Scroggs has defined pederasty in such a way that the only types of homosexual activity excluded by his definition would be a pair of male lovers who regularly exchanged active and passive roles and types of female homosexual activity that do not require active and passive partners. Scroggs cannot both define pederasty in this way and also argue that Paul's proscription of such activity was a uniquely Greco-Roman phenomenon that cannot be applied to other cultures. Of course, Scroggs would not accept this sort of reductionism as an adequate representation of his argument. His treatment of the pederastic "model" as a whole is much more sensitive and nuanced than this caricature, but on those occasions when he presses the issue, by broadening his definition of pederasty and forcing what would otherwise be considered exceptions to pederasty into his pederastic "model," he is also, by implication, reducing his conclusions to such an oversimplification.

Since this problem stems from the definition of pederasty, and since the Greeks coined the term, it is important to understand how they defined it. *Paiderastia* is an abstract noun compounded of *paides* (boys) and a derivative of *eraō* (I love), meaning "the love of boys."⁷ Since the word means "love of *paides*" it seems on an etymological basis that it would be difficult to have anything called pederasty where *paides* were not involved. Greek usage of the term bears out this assumption: I know of no occurrence of *paiderastia* or its cognates in ancient literature that refers to anything other than a love for *paides*. Love of youths for one-another, or love of men for men, or love between women may share certain similarities with pederasty, but they cannot be termed pederastic, at least according to Greek usage.⁸

Not only does Scroggs's definition of pederasty not conform to Greek usage, his understanding is not shared by any other scholars in the field. Brandt consistently uses "love of boys" to express his understanding of pederastic attitudes and practices (435–456). Dover does not define pederasty explicitly, but he assumes throughout that the reader will understand that pederasty is love of boys. He never uses the term for anything other than love for a boy.⁹ Marrou defines pederasty as a passionate friendship between "an adult man and an adolescent" (27). For Buffière, pederasty is "*l'amour des garçons*."¹⁰ As is often the case, Cantarella is clearest on the subject. She defines pederasty as a cultural, educational, and sexual practice, in which men courted, guided, taught, and had (either anal or intercrural) sex with male *paides* (1992:136–42).¹¹ The *paides*, when they grew into young men, subsequently took on the active role with other boys until the former reached the usual age for marriage, or even later.¹² Pederasty had its own customs and its own vocabulary:

⁷ Technically, *paides* can also in certain contexts refer to girls or slaves, but neither of these possible usages is relevant to the meaning of pederasty, which only refers to boys; cf. Golden: 309. The cognates, *paiderasteō*, *paiderastēs*, *paiderastikos* and *paideros*, also appear in Greek literature, though none of these forms is common.

⁸ Boswell asserts that *paiderastia* could be used in a broader sense among Greeks, but he offers no evidence that substantiates his claim, and he himself elsewhere uses "pederasty" in the same specific sense as other scholars in the field (30).

⁹ Eg. 15–17; 50–52 et passim. The same can be said of Flacière: 62–63.

¹⁰ "*Quand un homme adulte aime, non pas un autre adulte, mais un adolescent, c'est un cas particulier d'homosexualité, la pédérastie . . . Le pédéraste, en vérité, c'est l'éraсте—l'amoureux—d'un 'pais', d'un enfant, d'un garçon non encore adulte*" (9–11).

¹¹ Intercrural or "between the thighs" intercourse is commonly depicted on Greek pottery.

¹² It is often asserted that, once married, most men abandoned homosexual activity (if not physical attraction to young males) for a common heterosexual existence with, perhaps, an occasional fling with a boy. The type of evidence needed to confirm or deny this contention is rare. Whereas it is true that we have very little evidence of married men courting boys, Cantarella points to the example of Sophocles, who appears to have continued pursuing boys, as well as women, all his life (41); cf. Buffière: 605. Was Sophocles exceptional or normal? We cannot be sure, though the context in Athenaeus seems to lean toward the former (603f–604c). On the other hand, evidence of a man quitting a pederastic relationship at the time of his marriage is equally rare, though Catullus comes close (61). He recounts the marriage of Manlius Torquatus, at which time Manlius's boy sex-slave (*concupinus*) is

Erastēs is the young man, the lover and active sexual partner; *erōmenos* or *pais* or *paidika* is the boy, the beloved and passive sexual partner.¹³ The cultural and educational aspects of this relationship should not be overlooked, for these are central to the probable origins of the practice, and prominent in many of the sources, especially Plato's *Symposium*. The *erastēs* is expected to train his beloved in the ways of Greek adult life, including social, political, and military expectations.¹⁴

Scroggs correctly contends that there must have been some flexibility within the functional parameters of pederasty, but, given the specific signification of *paiderastia*, there was not nearly as much as he suggests. According to Cantarella, *pais* (boy), in the pederastic context, may range from twelve to eighteen years of age. To be older was not to be a *pais*; to be younger was considered too young for engaging in a pederastic relationship. The decisive point of transition from boy to young man appears to have been the sprouting of body hair. As this process varies among individuals and takes considerable time, the transition in pederastic roles also appears to have been somewhat flexible.¹⁵ At age eighteen, the youth reaches legal adulthood: he is an *ephēbos* (adult citizen) or *meirakion* or *neos* (young man) and becomes a part of the political and military establishment (cf. Golden:311). *Neaniskos* (youth) appears to be a non-technical term referring to the transitional stage between late childhood and early adulthood, roughly akin to our term "adolescent," though it seems to extend somewhat longer. According to Cantarella, "in some sources one is a *neaniskos* in the last years of *paideia* [while still a *pais*] . . . In other sources, however, the condition of *neaniskos* arises only after the age of majority has been reached . . . up to twenty-five or thirty years of age"(30). As we should expect, during this transitional period considerable sexual experimentation takes place. It would be a significant stretch of the term, however, to use "pederasty" to describe a sexual relationship between two *neaniskoi*. The basic idea of an adult teaching a boy about the ways of the world would not fit with such a situation. It is simpler and less of a linguistic stretch to recognize that young men in Greek culture, as in many

distraught over the loss of his lover. Catullus bids both of them pay homage to Talassius, the god of matrimony. This relationship is not technically pederastic, but it might offer a hint of at least the potential impact of marriage on other types of homosexual relationships.

¹³ *Erastes* and *erōmenos* were also occasionally used for lover and beloved in non-pederastic contexts. For further discussion, see Dover: 15–17. Most scholars argue that active and passive sexual roles were seldom if ever interchangeable, though the nature of the evidence is such that we should be hesitant to draw unduly firm conclusions. Boswell (1994: 56–57) calls this assumption a cultural myth. In the extant literature, we usually get only one glimpse of a particular homosexual relationship. We should hardly expect to be told, in such instances, whether the lovers involved ever changed roles. On the other hand, I know of only one specific piece of evidence that strongly implies such a change of roles (Dio Cassius 59.11.1; see discussion below).

¹⁴ Cantarella: 3ff; cf. Marrou: 26ff. On the possible origins of pederasty, see Bremmer: 279–298.

¹⁵ Dover notes that there are a couple of references to a *pais* who is already hairy (85); cf. Golden: 321–324.

others, have found many and various ways of experimenting with their budding sexuality.

Because Scroggs depends heavily on the first edition of Dover's work for his discussion of pederasty, he follows Dover in asserting that pederastic relationships were commonly based on inequality, impermanency, and fraught with the potential for humiliation, especially for the youth (Scroggs 1983: 36–37; cf. Furnish: 66–67). For Scroggs, the older, active partner is always the one attracted, the one who pursues and woos, and the one who derives most, if not all, of the pleasure from their sexual activity together. All the boy receives are a few gifts, a fleeting pride in his own beauty, and some educational benefits.

Scroggs is partially correct, as is evident in two sources he cites (and one he does not), which describe the boy's sense of frustration and humiliation in a pederastic relationship.¹⁶ This picture, however, is one-sided. The source of the distortion lies in Scroggs's dependence on Dover's first edition. In the 1989 edition of his book Dover added a postscript that pulled the intellectual carpet out from under this portion of Scroggs's argument, by retracting his earlier opinion that the "*eromenos* does not derive pleasure from copulation" (204). The three texts that claim that the *eromenos* is dissatisfied with his sexual role are surely valid expressions of individual feelings, but such feelings are by no means universal. Rather, there is also evidence that at least several youths derived sensual pleasure from the pederastic relationship.¹⁷

Plato appears to concur with this judgment when he casts Alcibiades in his *Symposium*. The text of Alcibiades's speech revolves around his attempts, when he was a boy (renowned as the most beautiful and desirable in Athens), to seduce Socrates, many years his senior. Alcibiades was greatly disappointed when Socrates agreed to teach him, guide him, and even sleep next to him, but refused to respond to the boy's sexual advances. Alcibiades, the would-be *erōmenos*, desired the pleasure of a pederastic sexual relationship and was not contented with a truly "platonic" relationship with Socrates (215a–222b). In addition to these four passages from literature, B250, a Black Figure vase dating to the sixth century BCE depicts lover and beloved engaging in intercrural intercourse; the boy has an erection.¹⁸ We should not, of course, ignore the fact that pederasty, by its very nature, is a relationship of unequal power. The man has a certain advantage over the boy, both in terms of size and status. Issues of consent and mutuality are, therefore, inherently problematic in such situations.

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Erotikos* 768; Plato, *Phaedrus* 240d; Xenophon, *Symposium* 8.21; cf. Scroggs: 37–38; cf. Dover: 52–53.

¹⁷ Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 591f.; *Knights* 963f.; Straton, *Palatine Anthology* xii. 7; Dover: 204; cf. Hupperts: 265.

¹⁸ Dover: 96f., 204. See the list of vases in Dover: 207–227.

Scroggs's language, at points, leaves room for this additional evidence by concluding that pederasty has the "potential" to be dehumanizing (43). When he claims, however, that this harmful potential was "frequently actualiz[ed]," and that the "majority of such relationships were characterized by lack of mutuality, both physically and spiritually" (43, 116, 126), he has imposed an interpretive burden that the evidence cannot bear. Of the many extant testimonia of pederastic relationships, we have only three instances where such dissatisfaction is expressed. As Dover came to recognize, the evidence for exploitation of the *erōmenos* by his elder lover is mixed—some relationships were surely dehumanizing, others were not; some may even have been both humiliating and pleasurable at different times. The important issue here is the use Scroggs makes of this concept of the dehumanizing potential of pederasty. If the majority of pederastic relationships were exploitative, Paul could condemn them for that reason and not because of their sexual preferences or practices. But if, as the evidence seems to show, at least some (and perhaps many, though we do not have enough evidence to determine relative frequency) pederastic relationships may have been mutually satisfying and pleasurable, Paul would not have that reason to condemn pederasty as an institution or its practitioners as a whole, as Scroggs suggests. It is much more probable that Paul was following the lead of his Jewish forebears, condemning homosexual activity, not because of its potential for dehumanizing relationships, but because males engaged in sexual activity with other males.¹⁹ But is it altogether clear that Paul was only condemning pederastic practices? That depends on what Paul may have known of non-pederastic homosexual activity, which can only be determined by an analysis of the evidence.

NON-PEDERASTIC HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICES IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

The primary burden of Scroggs's argument is to demonstrate that Paul only knew of the pederastic "model" of homosexuality, which is, therefore, the only thing he condemned.²⁰ There is no question that pederasty appears commonly in art and literature, and Scroggs has done a commendable job of documenting that fact. He also appears to have rec-

¹⁹ As Scroggs implies without exploring the implications (116, 89); cf. Huggins: 129; cf. Schmidt: 39–63.

²⁰ Note the progression in Scroggs's language: "The likelihood is that Paul is thinking only about pederasty" (116). "There was no other form of male homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world which could come to mind" (116). "Paul thinks of pederasty, and perhaps the more degraded forms of it, when he is attacking homosexuality" (117). "Paul [in Rom. 1] . . . has to be thinking about pederasty" (128). Only the first statement is defensible based on Scroggs's argument. The latter statements stretch well beyond even Scroggs's own evaluation of the evidence, making his case seem much more certain than it is.

ognized that exceptions to this "model" form the Achilles's heel of his argument, so he added Appendix A, "On the question of nonpederastic male homosexuality" (130–139). Here he discusses three general slogans, depictions on vase paintings (nine examples, all relegated to a single footnote), and fourteen examples of what are allegedly exceptions to pederastic practices in ancient literature. Unfortunately, Scroggs spends much of this appendix conquering a meager battalion of straw men. The general slogans beg the question, and many of the literary references refer to men involved in slavery and homosexual prostitution, none of which is relevant to the issue at hand. Scroggs rightly dismisses them, but he has proved nothing by doing so. The only significant portions of this appendix are: "Homosexuality between youths of approximately the same age" and "Adult Eromenoi." These sections offer genuine exceptions to pederastic practices that are worthy of further analysis. Even here Scroggs offers only a few of the many examples in literature, thus giving the misleading impression that such exceptions were rare.

The primary weakness of Scroggs's analysis of this issue lies in the chronology of the evidence. He does not reckon adequately with the fact that pederasty was most common among the social elite in some Greek city-states during the archaic and classical periods—400 years and more before Paul. From the time of the Peloponnesian war (431–404 BCE), evidence for pederastic practices declines considerably, though other homosexual practices continue unabated (Robinson and Flunk: 35–37; cf. Cantarella, 1992: 64). Cantarella demonstrates that in the Roman Republic, pederasty was considered the "Greek vice," which true Romans reviled, but that did not prevent them from engaging in other forms of homosexual activity.²¹ By the early second century BCE Rome had passed the *Lex Sca[n]tinia* and the edict *De adtemptata pudicitia* which made pederastic behavior, and even the attempt to seduce a freeborn boy, liable to criminal prosecution.²² By the time of the Principate, pederasty becomes extremely rare in the sources, while at the same time there appears to be a significant increase in homosexual activity among consenting adults (Cantarella, 1992: 155). Boswell correctly notes that, "the stereotyped roles of 'lover' and 'beloved' no longer seem to be the only model for homosexual lovers." (1980: 81). If pederasty ever served as a sexual "model," it could

²¹ Especially the use of boy slaves and male prostitutes (97–98). I do not, however, think Cantarella's stereotypical use of male machismo adequately explains Roman sexual practices in the Republic. Cf. Kroll: 145–78; cf. Veyne.

²² Cantarella: 118–119. For dissenting opinion, see Lilja: 112ff., 131. Despite these legal strictures, some Romans continued to succumb to the "Greek vice" during the last two centuries BCE, though evidence for pederastic relationships in Roman literature is not common in any period. Whether it ever became socially acceptable, as Cantarella contends, is debatable, since only a handful of elite, philhellenic poets in the late Republic and Augustan age manifest such an attitude. Catullus, Vergil, Horace, and Tibullus, all express attraction to both boys and women in varying degrees (Lilja: 51–81; cf. Cantarella: 120–150). MacMullen (484–502) argues that only among the Roman social elite is there any evidence of a tolerant attitude toward pederasty.

only have been during the classical age of Greece. Very little remains of the assumptions and practices that helped form that "model" in the century in which Paul lived. Behaviors that may have been considered exceptions to the pederastic rule in classical Greece, are not exceptions at all as we approach the common era.

It is important at this point to analyze the evidence, from both Greek and Roman sources, for male homosexual practices that fall outside the realm of pederasty. Taking our lead from Scroggs, let us begin with evidence from the vase paintings collected by Dover. R27 and R59 depict two boys, one somewhat taller than the other, in an erotic embrace.²³ R196 and R637 show boys courting one another. In R200, one boy caresses another reclining next to him, as is common in heterosexual scenes. A squatting boy in R223 pulls another boy down on his erect penis. In R243, three boys attempt trilateral sexual exploits. R954 portrays one boy mounting another (as is common in heterosexual scenes). B696, C74, CW 16, and R1167 may depict similar themes, but they are unclear.²⁴ Scroggs knows of no comparable depictions of two adults engaging in homosexual activity. Hupperts, however, has discovered in his study of Attic Black-Figure vases, at least twelve homosexual scenes involving two or more bearded men.²⁵ From such evidence he concludes, "I think I have shown enough vases to justify my conclusion that pederasty wasn't the only form of homosexual practice in Attica of the sixth century. According to the vases boys, youths or men of equal age could have been involved in a love affair" (263–264). This artistic evidence is cause enough for us to suspect that homosexual activity involving two boys or two men was more than just an exceptional phenomenon.

The literary evidence for non-pederastic homosexual practices is both more common and more significant than Scroggs implies. Perhaps the best example comes from Plato's *Symposium*. Although Scroggs cites this passage, he does not do justice to the implications of Plato's description of the relationship between Agathon and Pausanias. Pausanias became "lover" of beautiful Agathon when the latter was about eighteen (Plato, *Protagoras* 315d-e). He remains so in the *Symposium*, which is set in 416, over twelve years later, i.e., Agathon in this text is about thirty-one, the owner of the house which provides the setting for the dialogue, and a victorious tragic poet. When Agathon moved to Macedonia (c. 411–405),

²³ Boys are differentiated from men in the iconography of this period by the boys appearing without beards; cf. Hupperts; cf. Golden: 318ff. Scroggs cites only Dover R27, 59, 196, 223, 243, 547, 637, 851, and 954 (133). I do not consider R547 and 851 to be relevant, for they do not depict any explicitly homosexual activity.

²⁴ Dover refers to the subjects on these vases as "youths." He is probably correct, if he means by that term to identify these as older *paides* or *neaniskoi*.

²⁵ Hupperts: 261–262. E.g., Beazley, #246.84; 242.34; 243.44; 240.22; 240.21; 240.17; 239.10; 247.95; 102.98; 102.100; Mommsen #67; 110; Dover B634; New York Metropolitan Museum #56.171.24.

Pausanias seems to have followed him there (Dover: 84). Plato uses this relationship both as a source of good-natured humor and to make an important philosophical point in his *Symposium*. The focus of Pausanias's speech is that his relationship with Agathon is superior to common pederasty (and to heterosexual relationships), precisely because it has endured and is based on their loving regard for one another's souls (180c–185c). Even though Agathon is once referred to as *neaniskos* (198a), a probable reference to his youthful beauty, his relationship with Pausanias is between consenting adults whose age differential is by now irrelevant, who have chosen to continue mutually loving each other, in spite of the possibility of cultural censure.²⁶ The only possible residue of pederasty that remains between these two is Agathon's practice of shaving and, as many presume, his passive role in intercourse (though we have no specific evidence of this). In a later tradition Plutarch describes the love of the tragic poet Euripides for Agathon, who was then well advanced in years.²⁷ To term either of these a pederastic relationship is a serious stretch of the evidence and the language. In addition, Plato recognizes that there are other exceptions to pederastic relationships. In the *Euthydemus*, Ctesippus and Cleinias, both young men, are lovers.²⁸ Similarly, in the *Charmides*, Charmides, a young man himself, is said to be the *erōmenos* of other youths.²⁹

Xenophon, Plato's fellow follower of Socrates, includes three exceptions to the pederastic "model." In the *Memorabilia*, he refers to men "using men [not youths or boys] as women."³⁰ Menon, a youth in the *Anabasis*, is depicted as having a barbarian *erōmenos*, Ariaeus, who is a bearded man older than himself.³¹ The age and role reversal clearly move this relationship out of the realm of pederasty. Such a relationship could only be initiated by mutual consent. In his *Symposium* Xenophon portrays Critobulus and Cleinias, two young men well endowed with body hair, as lovers.³² It is important to note that all of these examples date from the heyday of pederasty: classical Athens. In subsequent centuries, as references to pederasty decline, the proportion of exceptions (if they may be termed exceptions at all) in the sources increases.

²⁶ Aristophanes heaps abuse on Agathon as his stereotypical effeminate character in his *Thesmophoriazousae*.

²⁷ Plutarch, *Erotikos* 770c; cf. Cantarella: 39. If there is any historical basis for this anecdote, Agathon's relationship with Euripides probably would not have taken place except after c. 411, when he was still with Pausanias, and before Euripides's death in 406.

²⁸ 273a–274d. Ctesippus, the *erastes*, is described as *neaniskos* and *neos*. Cleinias is a *meirakion*.

²⁹ 154a–d. His lovers are termed *paides* and *neaniskoi*. Charmides is described as *meirakion* and *neaniskos*.

³⁰ 2.1.30. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

³¹ 2.6.28. Scroggs cites this example, but dismisses it by noting, "The two were probably not significantly different in age, since the greater the age differential was, the harder it is to understand Menon taking the active role" (134). This relationship is only hard to understand if we insist on imposing common pederastic assumptions.

³² 4.23; 8.2. Critobulus, still an *erōmenos* himself, has begun to feel "desire for others [i.e., boys or youths]."

Aristotle describes the relationship between Philolaus and Dioclese who set up a single household together and remained together throughout their lives; they even made arrangements to be buried side-by-side (*Politics* 2.96–7 [1247a]; cf. Boswell 1994: 60). Plutarch describes the famous Sacred Band of fourth century BCE Thebes, which became the military powerhouse of Greece. One qualification for membership in this elite military corps was to become the homosexual lover of another band member, on the assumption that lovers would fight more fiercely for each other.³³ There is no evidence that there were any pre-adolescent members of this group; we must assume that they were all of prime fighting age. Pederastic practices would be unlikely in such a context, because they all must fight side-by-side as equals. Plutarch portrays Pelopidas as married at the same time that he was captain of the Sacred Band and, thus, attached to a male lover (*Pelopidas* 18–20). Epaminondas, the great Theban military leader, was so attached to his lover, Caphisodorus, that the two fell together at the Battle of Mantinaea and were buried together like a married couple (Plutarch, *Erotikos* 761d; cf. Boswell 1994: 88). Achilles Tatius depicts two pairs of young men as lovers.³⁴

Evidence for non-pederastic homosexual relationships increases as we widen our scope to explore Latin literature. Caligula, Roman Emperor from 37–43 CE, is said to have been attached to Lepidus as both lover and beloved.³⁵ Caligula also used Lepidus's wife as a concubine (when he was not busy seducing the wives of senators). Seneca, the contemporary of Paul and one time tutor to the emperor Nero, describes a slave whose master keeps him shaved, though he has reached manhood. Interestingly, Seneca claims he must "divide his time between his master's drinking bouts and his lust . . . in the bedroom he must be a man, at the feast a boy" (*Epistulae Morales* 47.7; cf. Scroggs: 138). Presumably the master enjoys the passive role in intercourse, at least some of the time, and the clean-shaven slave takes the active role. Suetonius notes that the short-term Emperor, Galba, loved mature, vigorous men (*Galba* 22; cf. Cantarella 1992: 160). Xenophon of Ephesus in his second-century CE novel, *Ephesiaca*, introduces Hippothoos, a truly versatile man who is consecutively in love with a male of his own age, an older woman, and a younger man.³⁶

³³ *Erotikos* 761a; cf. *Quaestionum Convivialium* 618d; *Pelopidas* 18.1–2.

³⁴ *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1.7; 2.33–34. Scroggs mentions this second-century CE text, commenting that, based upon the terms used to describe them (*neos* and *meirakion*), there may have been some age differential between these youths, but it was not likely great (134).

³⁵ Dio Cassius refers to both of them as *erastes* and *eromenos* (59.11.1), in this case calling into question the active/passive distinction commonly attributed to ancient homosexual lovers; Suetonius (*Caligula* 36) offers a Latin version of the story in more general terms. Paul could not have been familiar with either source, but stories of Caligula's sexual exploits were probably widespread in his own time.

³⁶ See Dalmeyda; cf. Boswell, 1980: 86.

There are a few cases where two males appear in our sources who are said to be married to other males.³⁷ The best-known example comes from the prolific pen of Cicero. In his *Philippics* Cicero castigates Marcus Antonius by bringing up his past relationship with Curio, with whom he joined "in a stable and permanent marriage."³⁸ Cicero implies that Antonius played the role of wife, though he was two years older than Curio. Cicero also notes that Catilina who fomented the notorious conspiracy in 63–62 BCE had a boyfriend-wife called Gabinius (*Post reditum in Senatu* 4; cf. Cantarella 1992: 108). The Emperor Nero had his slave, Sporus, castrated and dressed in feminine clothes. The two were then married with full nuptial ceremonies. The prodigious Emperor later married another man, Doryphorus; in this case Nero took on the role of wife. There is no mention of Doryphorus being a slave.³⁹ Scroggs rightly argues that poor Sporus had no choice in the matter, as he was a slave, but seen against the background of other homosexual marriages, it does not seem quite the aberration we might otherwise be inclined to think. Martial discusses two different homosexual marriages between two men.⁴⁰ Juvenal describes, with a note of horror, a marriage ceremony in which a young man of the illustrious Gracchus clan was given as wife to another man, complete with gown and veil. For Juvenal this is a supreme example of the decline of Rome from its glory days (*Satires* 2.117–42). The Emperor Elagabalus married Zoticus, an athlete from Smyrna, and then required all his courtiers to marry men if they hoped for advancement.⁴¹ In the fourth century CE a law issued by Constantius II and Constans prohibits a man from marrying a man "as if he were a woman."⁴² Whether the same thing is meant by "marriage" in all these cases is unclear, as is also the legal status of such unions, but the existence of some form of homosexual marriages cannot be doubted, and none of them can be termed pederastic in any meaningful sense (Boswell 1994: 3–107).

In sum, the extant sources for Greco-Roman homosexual practices demonstrate many exceptions to pederasty and a decline in the prominence of pederasty in the last three centuries immediately preceding Paul. Very few references to specifically pederastic activity occur in the literature and art of the last century before Paul's era. Considerations of space prevent us from exploring the evidence for homosexual use of male

³⁷ Boswell (1994) explores the evidence for and implications of such practices; cf. Dalla.

³⁸ *Philippics* 2.18.44–5, "... in matrimonio stabili et certo collocavit." Cicero claims that Antonius did it for money.

³⁹ Suetonius, *Nero* 28–39; Dio Chrysostom 21.6–8, Tacitus, *Annals* 15.37; cf. Scroggs 1983: 137. As with Caligula, Paul would not have known these sources, but he could have been familiar with stories about Nero.

⁴⁰ Martial 1.24; 12.42. At least one of these included a public wedding ceremony.

⁴¹ Lampirdius 10–11. This third century CE text only demonstrates the continuity of a trend after Paul's time.

⁴² *Theodosian Code* 9.7.3. Translation by Boswell 1994: 85–86.

slaves (which was commonplace) and the role of male homosexual prostitutes (both active and passive) for which there was apparently a viable market.⁴³ Suffice it to say that they only offer a yet more varied picture of homosexual life in the ancient world, and none of these can be construed to conform to the "model" of pederasty.

FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY IN ANCIENT LITERATURE AND ART

Beyond the male exceptions to pederasty, the evidence for female homosexual activity is of great significance for evaluating Scroggs's argument. Scroggs seems to have been aware that his treatment of female homosexuality in the main part of his text was insufficient. He therefore added an appendix on "Female Homosexuality in the Greco-Roman World."⁴⁴ In this brief section he discusses ten literary references and two depictions of female homoeroticism on vases. He then concludes that, "perhaps . . . male society did not think female homosexuality important or interesting enough to worry about" (144). In another context he claims, "I had to conclude that our sources did not permit us to make any certain statements about female homosexuality" (126). On the contrary, several certain statements can be made about female homosexual practices. One is that considerably more is known about homosexual activity among ancient women than Scroggs seems to recognize. Secondly, a closer analysis of the evidence and its implications opens a significant breach in Scroggs's entire argument.⁴⁵ Let us first examine the evidence that Scroggs includes and then proceed to evidence he does not.

Scroggs begins his discussion with the lesbian *par excellence* in popular circles: the seventh-century BCE lyric poet from Lesbos, Sappho. She is the only female author to discuss her own romantic impulses, and, thus, the fragments of her passionate poetry are invaluable. Unfortunately they do not tell us about her personal sexual practices, so it is not entirely certain that she actually indulged in homosexual activity. But she does reveal plenty about her sensual desires, which are mostly directed toward other women, perhaps including her students.⁴⁶ Many scholars have concluded that Sappho's passion was not confined to erotic lan-

⁴³ Scroggs discusses these in some detail (e.g., 1983: 38–42, Appendix A).

⁴⁴ Scroggs 1983: Appendix B, 140–144. *Tribades* is the usual Greek term for Lesbians. "Lesbian" referred to those who dwelt on the island of Lesbos and, based upon the islanders' reputation, the term could function as a code word for sexual licentiousness of all sorts. See Brooten 1985b: 61–87. In deference to modern usage while maintaining consistency with my references to male homosexual activity, I will use "lesbian" to refer to females who engage in sexual activity with other females.

⁴⁵ As noted by Wright 1989b: 295.

⁴⁶ On the life and work of Sappho, see Gentili; cf. Brooten 1985b; cf. Cantarella 1992: 80; cf. Dover: 173–179.

guage but was representative of her sexual practice. There is also some evidence that Sappho was married, which may make her, technically, a practicing bisexual (Cantarella 1992: 78–79).

Scroggs's second example of female homosexuality is Aristophanes's ribald and humorous speech in Plato's *Symposium* (189c–193d). The comic poet explains that love (*erōs*) came into being because humans were created originally like Siamese twins joined front-to-front. Some had two sets of male genitalia, some two sets of female genitalia, and some one set of each. Zeus then bisected these awkward creatures, thereby sentencing them to spend their lives searching to reunite with their original other half. "All the women who are sections of the [original double] woman have no great desire for men, but rather, are attracted to women—this kind of women are called woman-lovers."⁴⁷ One of the most difficult problems with interpreting Plato, and in particular this speech, is Plato's playful and subtle use of irony and humor. To derive philosophical or historical conclusions, without corroborating evidence, from a passage intended to generate laughter would make a mockery of any scholar. It is best to be cautious with this passage. What can be said with certainty is that Plato was familiar with some form of female homosexuality.

This judgment is confirmed by the next passage cited by Scroggs, from Plato's *Laws*. Here, in language remarkably similar to that employed by Paul in Rom. 1, Plato condemns both female and male homosexual practices as contrary to nature (*para physin*):⁴⁸ "When the natural forms of female and male come together for procreation, the pleasure in this act appears to have been given them in accordance with nature, but the immoderate pleasure experienced by males in intercourse with males or by females in intercourse with females seems to be contrary to nature, a most shameless act" (636c; cf. Dover: 186; cf. Scroggs: 131, 141). Plato condemns both male and female homosexual activity, because both circumvent the "natural" function of sexuality: in this context, procreation. Whatever else may be said about this passage, it is clear that Plato was aware of female homosexual practices and greeted them with disapproval. Pseudo Phocylides is, much like Plato, aware of female homosexual activity and does not approve of it. "Transgress not for unlawful sex the natural limits of sexuality. For even animals are not pleased by intercourse of male with male. And let not women imitate the sexual role of men."⁴⁹

On the subject of female homosexual practices Plutarch shares the same generally disapproving attitude as Plato and Pseudo Phocylides as

⁴⁷ 191e; *hetairistriaí*, "woman-lovers" is an uncommon synonym for *tribades*. Scroggs (1983: 141) contends that these are women who use non-male means to reach sexual orgasm, such as the *olisbos* (dildo).

⁴⁸ See Boswell 1980: 13–14 for a discussion of sexual "nature" in Plato; cf. De Young.

⁴⁹ *Maxims* lines 190–192. Translation by Van der Horst: 101, who dates the work to between c. 30 BCE and c. 40 CE; cf. Easton: 222–228; cf. Scroggs 1983: 96–97, 131–132.

he raises the issue in his *Whether Beasts Are Rational*: "Until now the desires of animals have not involved intercourse of male with male or of female with female. But such activities are common among your noble and good people" (990d; cf. Scroggs: 131–132, 141–142). Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* is less a biography of Lycurgus than a review of the political and cultural institutions of Sparta. Plutarch claims that pederasty was widely practiced there and that so also was female homosexuality. Scroggs correctly points out that this reference is unique in referring to homosexual relationships between Spartan women and girls, in a clear attempt to parallel the male institutions of pederasty (*Lycurgus* 18.4; cf. Scroggs: 142). Cantarella, however, notes that this is a description by a man of relationships he does not understand and does not like. That he should describe these relationships in male terms is not entirely surprising, but it is nonetheless distorting.⁵⁰ It is highly improbable that there was a female parallel to pederasty, for there is no other evidence of such a practice. In any case, Plutarch was well aware of the existence of female homosexual activity in Sparta and beyond.

Clement of Alexandria was a Christian scholar in the late second century CE and, thus, was himself probably influenced by Paul. Clement castigates women who "play the man against nature, both being married and marrying women" (*Paidogogos* 3.3.21; cf. Scroggs: 47, 142). Clement not only knows of the existence of female homosexual practices but of women who were public enough about it to be "married" (whatever that may have meant). The value of this text for understanding Paul is slight, except as it confirms the continuation of female homosexual activity in the Roman provinces. Pseudo Lucian, in an attempt to discredit male homoerotic attitudes and practices, suggests that the logical corollary of male homoerotic attitudes and practices should be the acceptance of female homosexual activity, including the use of the *olisbos* to enhance sexual pleasure. The satirical tone of this passage clearly implies that such acceptance of female homosexuality would be abhorrent (*Erotes* 28; cf. Scroggs: 47, 142). Lucian of Samosata was a satirist of the second century CE, again nearly a century after Paul. In his *Dialogues of the Courtesans* Lucian introduces us to Megilla who claims to have been married to another woman and to be able to satisfy female desires as well as a man. She then seduces Laena, whom she loves "as a man" (5). One of the great Latin poets and mythographers of Rome in the Augustan age, Ovid wrote about one Iphis who was raised as if she were a boy because her parents had wanted a boy. She subsequently fell in love with a woman, Ianthe, and bemoaned her fate because of the unnaturalness of her passion (*Metamorphoses* 9.666–797).

⁵⁰ Cantarella 1992: 84. Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, who were in a much better position to know and evaluate Spartan institutions, mention nothing of a female version of pederasty.

In addition to these ten literary references, Scroggs notes two examples of vase paintings that depict or imply female homosexual activity. An Attic red-figure vase dating from the classical period depicts one woman caressing another's genitalia (R207; cf. Scroggs: 143 n. 13). On another, dating from the same period, is portrayed a double *olisbos* (R223; cf. Scroggs: 141). The normal *olisbos* does not necessarily imply homosexual activity, but the double sided article was clearly meant for two women to use together for mutual stimulation.

When these pieces of evidence are placed before the reader, it is difficult to see how Scroggs can conclude that the evidence does not permit any certain statements about female homosexuality. Although we are left wishing we knew more, the evidence cited by Scroggs is surely sufficient to determine certain patterns and attitudes. Before drawing any conclusions, however, it is important to discuss a number of pieces of evidence, not included by Scroggs, that may help illuminate our understanding of female homosexual practices.

Let us begin with one additional reference to evidence found on pottery. An Aegean vase from Thera, dating to c. 620 BCE, depicts two women of equal height in a typical courting position, one touching the chin of the other.⁵¹

Beyond vase paintings, there are at least seven other literary references to female homosexual activity that Scroggs does not mention. Alcman, the Spartan poet, celebrates the love between two girls, Agido and Hagesichora, which in Cantarella's opinion, is tantamount to recognizing this as an "official union."⁵² In his third century BCE *Epigrams*, Asclepiades censures the behavior of Bitto and Nannion, two women who defy the laws of Aphrodite, joining in sexual activities "that are not seemly."⁵³ Seneca the Elder recounts the case of a lawyer who caught his wife in bed with another woman and killed both of them (*Controversiae* 1.2.23; cf. Brooten 1985b: 66). Phaedrus, who flourished around the same time as Seneca, explains the origins of *tribades* and effeminate boys: Prometheus got drunk while creating humans and in the process mistakenly placed male sexual organs on females and vice-versa. "Hence lust now enjoys perverted pleasure" (*Liber Fabularum* 4.16; cf. Brooten 1985b: 66; cf. Hallett: 209–227). Martial, who wrote during the same era, introduces us to two *tribades*. Philaenis is described as a "lesbian of lesbians" (*tribadum tribas*), an insatiable nymphomaniac who "sleeps with boys and . . . screws eleven girls

⁵¹ CE 34. The same courting position appears on vases portraying both heterosexual couples and males courting males; on occasion, the other hand is shown extending to caress the genitals of the courtee. The equality of height may imply that the women were of equal age and social status.

⁵² "Louvre Parthenion," Fr. 3; cf. Cantarella 1992: 81–82.

⁵³ *Epigram* 7; cf. Gow and Page: vol. 1, ln. 838–841; cf. Brooten, 1985b: 65–66; cf. Dover: 172.

a day."⁵⁴ Similarly, when Martial addresses Bassa, a woman whose chastity he once admired, he recoils in disgust when he discovers that her "monstrous lust imitates a man."⁵⁵ Iamblicus composed his novel *Babyloniaca* in the second century CE, of which only a fragment has been preserved in a tenth-century epitome by Photius. Yet even this fragment is revealing since Berenice, queen of Egypt, is described as having married her female lover, Mesopotamia (*Biblioteca* 94; cf. Brooten 1985b: 69). References to female homosexuality in the Greek and Latin literature of the second century CE and beyond could be multiplied, but we have already ranged beyond Paul's era, and later authors simply reiterate the motifs already noted.⁵⁶

Rabbinic literature offers some additional examples of female homosexual activity. Scroggs cites the *Sifra*, a rabbinic commentary on Lev. 18:3, in another context (81) without noting its reference to female homosexuality. The text applies Moses's warning to the Israelites (not to imitate the vices of Egypt and Canaan) to the particular vice of homosexual marriage, both male and female (*Ahare Moth*, *perek* 9, par.8; cf. Brooten 1985b: 64). Similarly, the *Jerusalem Talmud* includes a typical debate between the schools of Hillel and Shammai over whether female homosexual intercourse invalidates virginity and thus disqualifies such women from marrying priests.⁵⁷

What may we conclude from the evidence regarding female homosexual practices? Although examples do not appear in literature or art with the frequency of male homosexual activity, they are prevalent enough to be worthy of notice. The evidence shows that female homosexual practices were known, perhaps from Sappho's time until well after Paul's, in Greek and Latin literature, in eastern provinces and Italy, and even among Jewish rabbis. Since all the texts written by men sound at least some note of disapprobation, it is probable that the only universal social rule imposed by this patriarchal culture on female homosexual activity is "don't do it." Admittedly, the male lens through which we are forced to look distorts our

⁵⁴ "Pedicat pueros tribas Philaenis...undenas dolat in die puellas," *Epigrammata* 7.67, 70; cf. Brooten 1985b: 67. "Philaenis," in Martial, may hearken back to another Philaenis, who was renowned as the fourth-century BCE author of a book of "obscene postures," referred to as the "tablets of Philaenis" by Lucian in his *Mistaken Critic* (24). Aeschron (*Epigram* 1), however, denies that she wrote the book, attributing it instead to one Polycrates (see Gow and Page: vol. 1, ln. 1-9). Cf. Ps. Lucian, *Erotes* 28; cf. Athenaeus 5.220.f, 10.457d; cf. Polybius 12.13.1; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 53p. Note that Martial's identifying her as a *tribas* did not preclude her having intercourse with males: the "lesbian of lesbians" appears to be a practicing bisexual. Cf. Huggins: 190-191.

⁵⁵ 1.90. "Inter se geminos audes committere cunnos mentiturque virum prodigiosa venus." The meaning of "Venus," in this context, is unclear. Similar instances may occur in Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 95.21 and Juvenal, *Satires* 2.47-49 and 6.306-48, but the language is too allusive to be certain.

⁵⁶ See additional examples collected in Brooten 1985b: 69-70.

⁵⁷ Y. Gittin 49c, 70-71. Shammai disqualifies them, but Hillel permits them to marry a priest. Cf. Scroggs 1983: 80; cf. Brooten 1985b: 64-65. Note the bisexual assumption underlying this controversy.

understanding of the true inner dynamics of female homoeroticism—an understanding that might be corrected if only we could discover a few more sources from the pen of a woman to offer a more balanced picture. But in the absence of any such discoveries we must conclude that female homosexual practices took many forms, from an almost violent nymphomania to bisexuality to homosexual marriage. It is probable that there was no female parallel to pederasty (with the possible, though doubtful, exception of Plutarch's Spartan women). From what we can tell from the available evidence, the most prevalent form of female homosexual practice involved mutually consenting women of roughly equal age.

How does this information help us understand Paul's reference to homosexual activity in Rom. 1? The most important point is that Paul includes female homosexuality in his proscription (the only biblical reference to such activity) and links it to male homosexuality by the word "likewise" (*homoiōs*). Scroggs overlooks two crucial implications of Paul's inclusion of female homosexuality in Rom. 1:26–27. First, this reference helps us determine just how much Paul probably knew of the homosexual practices of his own culture. If there are so few extant references in ancient literature and art that Scroggs can conclude that the issue and practice were uninteresting and largely irrelevant to most Greeks and Romans, it is intriguing that Paul considered it important enough to include in his general condemnation. It begins to appear that Paul was probably well-informed, even about less common sexual practices.

Second, there is little indication in the sources that female homosexual practices were shaped by the customs of pederasty. Rather, most of the evidence we possess offers us glimpses of relationships between mutually consenting women. Even if Scroggs's argument that Paul only condemned pederasty among males could withstand critical scrutiny, the same qualification cannot be applied to female homosexual practices.

What may we conclude from this survey of ancient homosexual practices? The picture that emerges is characterized by great diversity. If we could take the time to include evidence for heterosexual activity, it would become clear that, if there was any sexual "model" in ancient Greece and Rome, it can best be described as bisexual.⁵⁸ This concept has been admirably captured in the title of the most important recent contribution to the subject, Cantarella's *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*. Our modern use of the English language has served to distort the issue. We tend to speak of heterosexuals or homosexuals, gay or straight. The Greeks and Romans had no such language at their disposal. From their point of view humans are simply sexual, and they have expressed that sexuality in many differ-

⁵⁸ Scroggs apparently recognizes the importance of bisexuality in antiquity without exploring its implications as a model or the problems it poses for his conception of a pederastic model (1983: 27, 145–149); cf. Lilja: 9.

ent ways, with their own sex or the opposite or, perhaps more commonly, if pederastic practices tell us anything, with both at different times, maybe even at the same time (Halperin: 41ff.). Not that all practices were deemed equally acceptable—they had laws regulating sexual behavior,⁵⁹ as well as lively disagreements over the relative merits of different types of sexual activity.⁶⁰ My primary conclusion is that the bisexual “model” that characterized the Greco-Roman world admitted of a plethora of sexual practices and attitudes, as different as human desires and the potential for human creativity, from multi-party orgies to platonic love, from pure heterosexuality to true bisexuality to committed adult homosexual marriage.⁶¹

In fact, however, I am not sure that a sexual “model” is a useful construct; as far as the evidence is concerned, only sexual attitudes and behavior can be evaluated. As far as attitudes are concerned, women were expected to be chaste, for all the usual reasons in patriarchal societies. Men were quite free (at least according to the male authors who discuss such things) to use slaves or prostitutes, male or female, and to engage in homosexual affairs before, instead of, and, perhaps, in addition to marriage. Greeks, in the classical period, seem to have favored homosexual relationships with boys, whereas homosexual relationships between adults could serve as the butt of ribald humor such as in the plays of Aristophanes (e.g., *Frogs* 52; *Clouds* 961–1103; cf. Cantarella 1992: 44–46). Romans, though they made laws against pederasty, did practice it on occasion, and, although many frowned on male adults filling the passive role in a homosexual relationship, such strictures seem not to have eliminated such behavior, especially as the scope of homosexual activity expanded in the early Empire.

When it comes to sexual behavior, there are only a limited number of options, and the evidence demonstrates that the Greeks and Romans were busily engaging in almost every form of expression known to us, with perhaps some variation in emphasis. Scroggs is correct that pederasty was a different cultural expression common among classical Greek males (though something similar is by no means foreign in our culture). He was wrong, however, despite his disclaimers to the contrary (116, 126, 139), to use Procrustes’s bed to force almost all ancient homosexual practices into his “model” of pederasty.

CONCLUSIONS

What has all this haggling over ancient history to do with Paul’s meaning in Rom. 1:26–27 and its implications for the modern denomina-

⁵⁹ See Cantarella 1992: 27ff., 104ff.; cf. Dalla: *passim*; cf. Cohen.

⁶⁰ Scroggs includes a useful discussion of these debates (1983: 44–65).

⁶¹ Cantarella expresses dismay at the oversimplification of Scroggs’s conclusions (1992: 232 n. 112).

tional debates? Scroggs rightly suggests that three separate issues must be addressed: 1) We must ascertain the meaning biblical statements “*had* for the writers in their own, concrete situation”; 2) “The biblical statements must be consonant with the larger, major theological and ethical judgments which lie at the heart not only of Scripture but of the historical church throughout the ages”; 3) “The context today must bear a reasonable similarity to the context of the statement at the time of writing” (123).

What was the meaning of Rom. 1:26–27 for Paul’s immediate audience? Scroggs’s most crucial argument is that, even though Paul used general language to proscribe both male and female homosexual practices, “Paul thinks of pederasty, and perhaps the more degraded forms of it when he is attacking homosexuality” (117). A key proof text, that Scroggs uses no fewer than five times in support of his contentions, is the parallel of Philo, who used general language similar to Paul’s to condemn pederasty specifically (95, 108, 115, 116, 130): “But the entertainment recorded by Plato [the *Symposium*] is almost entirely connected with love; not that of men madly desirous or fond of women, or of women furiously in love with men, for these desires are accomplished in accordance with a law of nature (*nomois physeōs*), but with that love which is felt by men for one another (*andrōn arresin*), differing only in respect of age . . . And, having corrupted the age of boys (*paidikēn*), and having metamorphosed them and removed them into the classification and character of women, it has injured their lovers (*erastas*) also . . .”⁶²

A closer look at this text makes it clear why Scroggs’s interpretation of Rom. 1 will not work. Philo does use general language like Paul, and even many of the same terms, but he does not stop there. Since Philo’s intent is only to condemn pederasty, he goes on to describe pederasty in *specific* terms (e.g., *paidikēn*, *erastas*, and his mention of age differential), so that there can be no mistaking his meaning.⁶³ This is precisely what Paul does not do. Scroggs’s interpretation of Paul depends upon Paul’s ignorance of any exceptions to pederasty. Suppose I had become frustrated with student-athletes cutting classes, and decided to censure such behavior by writing a letter to the editor of the student paper. If I proceeded to write that, “we have a major problem on this campus with student-athletes,” my words should be justly criticized for overgeneralization. My language would only be excusable if my entire knowledge of student-athletes consisted of those who cut classes. But if I knew of any student-athletes who did not cut classes, it would be sloppy, misleading, and irresponsible for me to use such general language when I only intended to censure a particular type of student-athlete. If Paul knew only of pederasty, his lack of clarifi-

⁶² Philo, *Vita Contemplativa* 59–62. Translation from Yonge: 703.

⁶³ Philo surely knows that many other types of homosexual activity are practiced among his contemporaries. The fact that he has chosen to single out pederasty for particular censure may well be somewhat anachronistic, stemming from his immersion in the works of Plato.

cation could at least be attributed to his lack of knowledge of his world. If, however, Paul knew of even one exception to pederasty, the excuse of ignorance is lost. If he knew of several exceptions to pederasty, his use of general language becomes dangerously misleading, for his sloppiness would unwittingly condemn all homosexual practices, including those he might consider acceptable, when he only intended to censure pederasty. Paul could easily have been as precise as Philo, but it appears that he chose not to be.

We cannot, of course, be certain what Paul knew, but ancient historians can be little concerned with certainty; we can only discuss probability. We cannot be sure what, if any, of the evidence we have examined might have been known to Paul. Rather, the evidence offers a picture of the cultural milieu in which Paul lived. Considering the weight of the evidence for non-pederastic homosexual practices in his world, among both men and women, the declining prominence of pederasty, and considering that Paul was a widely traveled Roman citizen, who spent considerable time in Macedonia and Achaia, including Corinth (which was renowned for its sexual creativity), it is most improbable that he would have been ignorant of at least some exceptions to the proposed pederastic "model." In fact, it is highly probable that he knew that bisexuality was the standard "model" for sexual behavior among his contemporaries. Considering Paul's highly developed sense of his apostolic mission and the authority and responsibility that went with it, it is difficult to imagine him using such irresponsibly vague language in Rom. 1 if he intended only to censure one form of homosexual behavior. But the evidence that places the matter beyond any reasonable doubt is Paul's reference to female homosexuality. If he knew anything about female homosexual activity and proscribed such behavior, it is most unlikely that he could have been ignorant of exceptions to pederasty. If he knew about *tribades* who, as it appears from the evidence, often engaged in relationships of mutual consent without reference to active/passive distinctions or age differentiation or exploitation, it is extremely improbable that he was referring only to pederasty when he proscribed male homosexual practices. The parallels of language and the close linkage between Paul's references to male and female homosexual behavior do not permit such an interpretation—which brings us back to our starting point: What did Paul mean?

I believe that the only interpretation that does justice to the literary and historical context is that Paul probably did know of at least several different types of homosexual practices among both men and women. He used general language in Rom. 1, because he intended his proscription to apply in a general way to all homosexual behavior, as he understood it. In context, then, homosexual activity, in all its manifestations (as understood by Paul), is evidence of God's judgment on human sinfulness, deriving from the most primal of all sins, "worshipping and serving created things rather than the creator" (v. 25). But homosexuality is only

one such evidence; it is intimately linked to the catalog of vices that follows, including covetousness, malice, strife, deceit, gossip, and haughtiness (vv. 29–31). Paul's proscription must be taken in the context in which it is presented. For him, humanity is full of corruption, as is evident in the lives of all persons, and Paul (as well as other biblical authors) does not place any special emphasis on censuring homosexual activity; rather, the opposite is the case. Paul devotes many more pages to the unjust use of money than to homoerotic activity. Nevertheless, I do not think there is any avoiding the conclusion that Paul considers homosexual behavior to be sinful.

Once we have ascertained the meaning of this particular text in context, it is important to understand its relationship to other relevant texts in the Bible and to the major theological themes of the Christian faith. The implications of this study are revealing for the interpretation and application of other biblical passages. If Paul, in Rom. 1, has censured homosexual activity in general terms, it appears that he has in fact reaffirmed the Levitical tradition based on Lev. 18:22 and 20:13; these texts should, therefore, no longer be consigned to the ethical backwater of an archaic Hebrew purity code, as has too often been the case (Brooten 1990: 83). In addition, if Paul has reaffirmed the Levitical tradition, this understanding sheds light on the problematic neologism, *arsenokoitai* ("those who lie/sleep with males"), which appears in 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10, in both cases in the context of a catalog of vices.⁶⁴ As for the theological implications of Rom. 1, I would suggest that there is much more work to be done, both on the broader hermeneutical questions, and on how Rom. 1 fits into the larger picture of biblical sexuality and such important themes as marriage, love, and justice.⁶⁵ There is also practical work to be done on how the grace and love of God and the compassion of the Christian community may be extended to those who consider themselves to be homosexuals.⁶⁶

How this study of Rom. 1 should be applied to the modern situation brings us to Scroggs's third parameter: does the cultural context Paul

⁶⁴ There can be little doubt that Scroggs is correct in interpreting this term, whose first appearance in Greek literature is probably 1 Cor. 6:9, as an attempt to render the language of Lev. 20:13, "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination" (NRSV), into Greek (83, 106–107). *Zakar miskebē* in the MT becomes in the LXX *arsenos koitēn*, which Paul or some Hellenistic Jew before him simply combined into a single word. I do not, however, concur with Scroggs's contention that the New Testament references to this term are meant to apply only to those who engage the services of male prostitutes. Cf. Wright 1984: 129. It may not be precisely correct to translate *arsenokoitai* as "homosexuals," largely because of the confusion inherent in the modern usage of the term, but the inclusion of "lying with males" in a list of vices rests on the same assumptions as Paul's condemnation of homosexual activity in Rom. 1 (see Petersen: 187–191).

⁶⁵ For further discussion, see Deming; cf. Schmidt; cf. Furnish; cf. PCUSA; cf. Cosby.

⁶⁶ Useful contributions have been made in this area by Scanzoni and Mollenkott, and Thorson-Smith. Most such publications are quite biased. For a more balanced approach, see Siker; cf. Schmidt.

addressed bear a reasonable similarity to that of twentieth-century America? I think we must answer, "yes," with significant qualifications. The kaleidoscopic picture that emerges from the ancient evidence sounds strangely familiar. Indeed it should, since the results of one of the most important studies of modern American sexual behavior, by Alfred Kinsey and associates, concludes that modern male sexual practices cannot be bifurcated into heterosexual and homosexual. Such categories probably do not exist in any pure sense. Rather, American sexual behavior should be viewed as a continuum: on one extreme is the pure heterosexual, who has never had a homosexual thought. On the opposite extreme is the pure homosexual, who has never had a heterosexual desire. Between these extremes lies the bulk of modern American sexual behavior, with the majority of people limiting their sexual practices to the opposite sex, and a minority of people limiting their sexual activity exclusively to the same sex. We tend to forget the significant number of people who are either predominantly homosexual with occasional heterosexual encounters or vice versa. The pure bisexual, who has no preference one way or another, lies in the center of the continuum. We may argue about the percentages of each, the reasons for such behavior, or the problem of Kinsey's sample and techniques, but the basic conception is still a sound representation of modern sexual behavior.⁶⁷

I have no doubt that Greeks or Romans would agree that Kinsey's continuum also represents their behavior, albeit with some differences in cultural expression. We have our Man-Boy Love associations, our bath-houses, our bisexuals, and our committed monogamous homosexual relationships,⁶⁸ as well as our faithful and less-than-faithful heterosexual marriages. On the one hand, then, we must conclude that there are significant similarities in the cultural expression of sexual activity between the Greco-Roman world and our own. On the other hand, we must be careful not to minimize the remaining cultural differences. The Greeks idealized youthful male beauty; we do not.⁶⁹ Many Greeks and at least some upper-class Romans were widely tolerant of male homosexual activity, within certain limits;⁷⁰ our culture tends to treat homosexuality as one of the more heinous of evils, perhaps as a result of our medieval European

⁶⁷ Kinsey et al.: ch. 12. The basic outlines of this continuum have been confirmed and applied to females by more modern research. In the most thorough and systematic study to date, Laumann et al. claim that, among Americans, 9% of men and 4% of women have engaged in any type of homosexual activity since puberty; 1.3% of women and 2.7% of men have been homosexually active in the past year; 0.6% of men and 0.2% of women have been exclusively homosexual since puberty. While most people limit their sexual activity to contact with the opposite sex, there is a significant number of people who engage in bisexual activity, even if they do not identify themselves as "bisexual" (283–311).

⁶⁸ The prevalence of such committed, monogamous relationships has been exaggerated in popular circles. For further discussion, see Schmidt: 100–108; cf. Laumann et al.

⁶⁹ For fuller discussion, see Brandt: 416ff.; cf. Buffière: 123ff.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of legal limitations, see Cantarella 1992: 27ff., 97ff.; cf. Cohen; cf. MacMullen.

heritage.⁷¹ Women in Greek, and to a lesser extent in Roman, culture were held in extreme subjugation to their male superiors (see Pomeroy; cf. Cantarella 1987), a far cry from our cultural assumptions and practices. Our conceptions of romance, dating, and the meaning of marriage are to a large extent foreign to ancient cultures (Boswell 1994: 3ff.) Pederasty, in our culture, would be translated as sex with a minor and prosecuted as Lewd and Lascivious Conduct or Statutory Rape. If bisexuality was considered "normal" in Greco-Roman culture, it is not in ours, which emphasizes heterosexuality as the only "normal" sexual option. The distribution of sexual activity along Kinsey's continuum may have looked somewhat different for ancient people than it does for modern Americans. Perhaps homosexual activity was more widespread among Greeks and Romans, as a result of the relative acceptability of such behavior in their cultures (though the evidence is by no means sufficient to make any judgments about relative frequency). These are legitimate distinctions between two cultures, and I have no doubt others could be added.

For our present purposes, however, do these cultural differences render Paul's derogation of homosexual practices irrelevant to the modern situation? I do not think so. In Rom. 1 Paul is not interested in censuring sexual "models." Rather, he is concerned to offer evidence of attitudes and behavior that represent the distorting effects of godlessness. The attitudes and behaviors censured by the general language of Rom. 1:26–27 are common to all cultures regardless of their relative acceptance within any particular culture. It is important, however, to be very circumspect in making such a judgment for, as far as we know, Paul never faced what many churches are facing today: people who claim to be committed, self-affirming homosexuals and also committed Christians. How would Paul respond to such people? Perhaps he would react as he did to the work of the Spirit among gentiles and retreat from his Jewish assumptions. Then again, perhaps he would respond as he did to the Corinthian Christians, for all we know committed church members, who were engaging the services of prostitutes, to whom Paul responds: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!" (1 Cor. 6:15 NRSV). The modern situation is paralleled in both scenarios, but not perfectly in either. For Paul, all are sinners in God's sight, and all sinners may receive forgiveness through God's grace. But Paul is also not afraid to rebuke what he considers sinful behavior and call people to repentance. Based on my understanding of his view of sexuality, especially his discussion of marriage and celibacy (1 Cor. 6:12–7:40), I suspect that Paul would not condone modern homosexual activity any more than he did its

⁷¹ This understanding is, I think, one of the most valuable contributions of Boswell's study, 1980: 333ff.

ancient counterpart, but he would never set it apart as an issue of great moment. For Paul, homosexuality was a minor issue (as far as human sinfulness can ever be a minor issue). That our culture has separated out homosexuality as it has, and that there are not similar debates within ecclesiastical bodies about the ordination of those who are unrepentant in their covetousness, is evidence of the perversity of our culture. For too long, Rom. 1 and other biblical texts have been used to persecute and discriminate against people who engage in homosexual activity. Such an application is unacceptable. I suspect that ecclesiastical bodies would be more faithful to the spirit, and the letter, of the Bible if they were to spend considerably more effort dealing with materialistic values among American clergy rather than turning a telephoto lens on homosexual activity. If the current discussion of the moral qualifications for ordination is to be meaningful, biblical and ethical principles need to be applied consistently.

Beyond these issues, I believe the present study raises two questions that are crucial to the larger survival and meaning of Christian churches in our culture. What is to be done with Paul? And how should churches respond to modern American culture? The first question raises the problem of what exactly does biblical authority mean for the denominations that profess belief in it? Scroggs rightly points out that it is unacceptable simply to throw Bible verses around without doing the often strenuous work of exegesis—a point well taken. But once scholars or ministers have done their best to understand a text and its cultural implications, what should they do with it? In particular, now that we have determined that Paul probably proscribed at least all forms of homosexual behavior with which he was familiar, many of which are widely practiced today, how should church leaders respond? The time has come to move beyond the simple and often patronizing comments about how New Testament references to homosexuality have been misinterpreted for centuries and are irrelevant to the modern situation. It is no longer possible, as has too often been the practice, to hold up copies of Boswell's or Scroggs's books as if they have put the question to rest. Rather, it appears that although many texts have been misinterpreted and misapplied, Rom. 1 is relevant to the modern discussion. It is no longer possible to remove Paul from the discussion by arguing that he has nothing to contribute. If that is so, it is necessary to face one of the most controversial ecclesiastical questions of the last century: once carefully interpreted, was Paul correct, on an ethical level? Does Paul's perspective represent the word of God to churches? What is meant by such a statement? Or is Paul's understanding of right and wrong behavior (once carefully interpreted and applied) merely one among many voices seeking to interpret the will of God throughout the ages? Or is he simply out-of-date or homophobic or blinded by patriarchal assumptions? What is the meaning of Paul's authority for churches today?

Brooten proposes one solution: "The churches and theology have the task of thinking through the implications of the fact that Romans 1:26 cannot be extricated from its immediate context or from pauline thinking about women and men. In Paul's eyes a woman who physically expressed love for another woman was repeating the pattern of idolatry, that is, of estrangement from God . . . If one declares Rom. 1:26 (and 27) not to be normative for theology, one cannot adopt the rest of Pauline theology and theological anthropology" (1985b: 81). Comstock is a little more clear, if somewhat less gentle: "Not to recognize, critique, and condemn Paul's equation of godlessness with homosexuality is dangerous... Passages [like Rom. 1] will be brought up and used against us again and again until Christians demand their removal from the biblical canon or, at the very least, formally discredit their authority to prescribe behavior" (43).⁷² Soards agrees with Brooten and Comstock on the basic issues at stake, but draws very different conclusions: "If I believe that Paul is correct in Romans 1 about God . . . and I do; and if I believe that Paul is right in Romans 1 about the human situation—that we are all powerlessly in bondage to the distorting power of sin—and I do; then, I am unable to find a persuasive argument that undermines Paul's diagnosis of homosexual activity. In fact, I believe that by refusing to say a biblical word about homosexual activity in the world today the church has taken the easy path, not the high road . . ." (64). Scroggs, in his most recent foray into print suggests that the concept of biblical authority be abandoned altogether and replaced with the idea of the Bible as "foundational document" (1995). What other perspectives might be worthy of consideration? If biblical authority means anything in modern churches, now is a prime opportunity to bring clarity to the issue.

The second issue that desperately needs to be addressed is the relationship between Christians and the culture they live in. Throughout the ages, one of the strengths of Christianity has been its ability to adapt to cultures without becoming merely the by-product of any particular culture. This strength, however, has also been the source of much controversy. Broadly speaking, many Christian churches have adopted an antagonistic stance toward modern American culture, which they view as bent on destroying all that Christians hold dear. Many other ecclesiastical bodies have made it their practice to baptize any movement that becomes popular in our culture. Our culture has spawned a new movement calling for "Gay Rights." How should an ecclesiastical body respond? Based on what principles? In what ways might the Bible inform ecclesiastical responses? My hope is that there will be a few more scholars out there

⁷² Williams (53) calls Rom. 1 a "text of terror."

like Robin Scroggs, who are willing to ask the tough questions and do the difficult work of digging for answers, willing to take risks for the sake of asking, seeking, and knocking at the door of Truth.

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Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality¹

David F. Greenberg
New York University

Marcia H. Bystryn
Twentieth Century Fund

From late antiquity to the Middle Ages there was historical variability in Christian responses to homosexuality. This paper traces Christian intolerance of homosexuality to the ascetic movements that arose from the social crises of the ancient Mediterranean world and to the Gregorian reforms of the medieval Church.

Historical and anthropological research has documented wide variability in the social acceptance of homosexual activity. In some times and places, some forms of homosexual interaction have been fully institutionalized, sometimes serving religious and educational functions. Yet homosexuality² has also met with hostile responses ranging from mild disapprobation or ridicule to imprisonment and execution (Matignon 1899; Carpenter 1919; Ford and Beach 1951; Karlen 1971; Dover 1974, 1978; Bullough 1976; Katz 1976; Trumbach 1977; Ungaretti 1978; Boswell 1980; Bremmer 1980).

Despite the attention the labeling theory literature of the past two decades has given to the creation of deviant categories, explanations of this variability are few. Textbooks either ignore the issue or deal with it cursorily with reference to the Judeo-Christian tradition. But this approach leaves many questions unanswered. Why did Judaism and Christianity prohibit homosexual activity when other religions did not? If the early Christian church abandoned some Jewish practices (such as dietary restrictions, circumcision, and observance of Saturday as the Sabbath), why did it preserve others? If, in the course of centuries, Christians modified or aban-

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Society for the Study of Social Problems in 1978. For comments and discussion, we are grateful to B. Richard Burg, Nancy Chodorow, Michael Goodich, Meredith Gould, Laud Humphreys, Jonathan Katz, Martin Levine, Stephen Murray, Christine Stansell, Dennis Wrong, an anonymous reviewer, and members of the Sexual Fraternity Seminar of the New York Institute for the Humanities. Requests for reprints should be sent to David F. Greenberg, Department of Sociology, New York University, New York, New York 10003.

² Because evidence about lesbianism is so limited, much of what we have to say concerns male homosexuality. The context will make clear whether references to homosexuality refer to men alone or to men and women.

done some early doctrines, such as the prohibition of usury and, for Protestants, priestly celibacy, why not all? If the condemnation of homosexuality in other religions had little if any impact on popular attitudes,³ why did it have such a powerful impact on Jews and Christians? Moreover, the assumption of some authors (e.g., Crompton 1978) that the Christian West has been marked by relentless persecution of homosexuals over a period of two millennia has not been demonstrated. Indeed, several recent studies suggest that the treatment of homosexuality in Christian Europe over the last two millennia has been extremely variable (Roby 1977; Goodich 1979; Boswell 1980).

Boswell (1980) has linked this variability to urbanization, arguing that exposure to the cultural diversity of cities makes people more tolerant. Intolerance of homosexuality is thus assumed to be more prevalent in culturally homogeneous rural areas. This reasoning leads Boswell to attribute the growth of intolerance toward homosexuality in the late Roman Empire to the deurbanization that accompanied economic decline and the barbarian invasions.

There are reasons for questioning this logic. As Boswell himself notes, the period of repression that began in 13th-century Europe was not accompanied by a reduction in the number or size of towns. If anything, Europe was becoming more urban. The little surviving evidence about the barbarian Germans does not indicate that they were particularly hostile to homosexuality (Bremmer 1980). The anthropological literature cited above documents the existence of many nonurbanized peoples who were not generally hostile to homosexual expression. For example, in the mountains of early 20th-century Albania—a region far from urbanized—male homosexual marriages were celebrated in churches (Näcke 1965). Homosexual relationships between men and boys were or are virtually universal among the Papuans and the Sambia of New Guinea (Williams 1969; Herdt 1981). While evidence from Europe and the United States over the past few centuries does suggest that cities facilitate the emergence of homosexual subcultures, the very visibility of these subcultures may elicit hostile attacks.

For these reasons, the exploration of alternative hypotheses seems warranted. Here we will examine the contributions made by the economic and political transformations of the late Hellenistic and Roman empires and

³ For example, the Koran derogates homosexual acts and, though it does not clearly specify a penalty, seems to include them among other punishable sexual derelictions (for a discussion of the relevant passages see Bullough [1976], pp. 221–22), yet open celebrations of marriages between men have been reported from parts of the Maghreb, and quite favorable attitudes toward homosexuality have prevailed in some Moslem societies (see, e.g., Boswell [1980], pp. 194–96, and Hodgson [1974], pp. 145–46). No efforts were made to suppress the homosexual relationships that developed frequently in Tibetan monasteries despite the vow of chastity required of all Buddhist monks (Prince Peter 1963).

the church reforms of the Middle Ages to the crystallization of a distinctly Christian intolerance of homosexuality. We will argue that early Christian views of sexuality were formed in the context of a broad trend toward asceticism in the Hellenistic and late Roman empires and of the competition between what was eventually recognized as the orthodox Christian church and other religious cults, including the Gnostics. Although the early Church made attempts to forbid and control homosexuality, harsh repression, carried out consistently over an extended period, began only in the high Middle Ages. We link this development with the Gregorian reforms in the Church, the rise of a centralized monarchy, and the growth of class conflict in medieval city-states.

HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

The ancient Greeks attached no great social significance to the sex of sexual partners. Where arguments about the relative merits of male and female lovers are recorded, the two are accorded equal status. No conception of a homosexual person existed; sexual object choices were not thought to be, and generally were not, mutually exclusive. This is implicit in the comments made by the Greek historian Alexis about Polycrates, the wealthy ruler of 6th-century Samos. Alexis expresses his astonishment that even though Polycrates had imported many expensive goods, 'the tyrant is not mentioned as having sent for women or boys from anywhere, despite his passion for liaisons with males' (quoted in Padgug [1979]).

Male homosexuality among the ancient Greeks has been regarded commonly as having arisen as an expression of the "comradeship of arms" among noble warriors in the Heroic Age or as part of a primitive religious initiation ceremony for young men. In the classical period it usually involved temporary relationships between youths and older men. These relationships played an important role in the young men's education, particularly that of the aristocrats, and were utilized to strengthen the zeal of soldiers; indeed, the Theban army composed of homosexual lovers was reputed to be undefeatable (Licht 1963; Flacelliere 1962; Ungaretti 1978; Dover 1974, pp. 213–15; 1978, p. 16; Bullough 1976, pp. 93–126; Bremner 1980).

Age-asymmetric sexual relationships among males are not uncommon in highly patriarchal societies.⁴ In these societies, all sexual relationships are conceptualized in terms of heterosexual relationships involving superordination and subordination. Just as men dominate women in heterosexual rela-

⁴ We use the term "patriarchy" to refer to the personal domination of a male head of household over the other members of the household (Weber 1968, pp. 1006–7), not as a synonym for all forms of sexual domination of women by men, which is an imprecise usage found in much recent literature on gender.

tionships, so one man dominates another man or a boy in a homosexual relationship. This subordination is considered demeaning to the submissive partner, who is regarded as a "woman" in the relationship, but not to the controlling partner, whose superior masculine status is confirmed by his domination of another man⁵ (Vangaard 1972; Ungaretti 1978; Dover 1978, pp. 76–109; Bremmer 1980).

How little of Greek thinking about sexual matters was governed by the sexes of the partners and how much by their relative social positions can be seen in *The Interpretation of Dreams* of Artemidorus Daldianus, a Greek of the 2d century A.D.⁶ The section on sexual dreams indicates that

having sexual intercourse with one's servant, whether male or female, is good; for slaves are possessions of the dreamer, so that they signify, quite naturally, that the dreamer will derive pleasure from his possessions. . . . If a man is possessed by a richer, older man, it is good. For it is usual to receive things from such people. But to be possessed by someone who is either younger than oneself or destitute is unlucky. For it is usual to give things to such people. The same also holds true if the possessor is older but a beggar. . . . Possessing a brother, whether he is older or younger, is auspicious for the dreamer. For he will be on top of his brother and disdainful of him. And whoever possesses his friend will become his enemy, since he will have injured his friend without provocation. [1975, pp. 59–60]

A juvenile male can be dominated by older men in a patriarchal society without incurring a stigma because the subordination of the young is a "natural" (and, for any individual, temporary) feature of a patriarchal social structure. The ideal homosexual relationship in ancient Greece conformed to this pattern, and most actual relationships appear to have done so as well, though exceptions to this generalization were not unknown.⁷

Some scholars have maintained that homosexuality never found the same acceptance among the Romans as among the Greeks (Bullough 1976, pp. 137–38); however, Boswell (1980, pp. 61–87) has amassed considerable evidence challenging this conclusion. Although expressions of distaste for homosexuality can be found in Roman literature, negative attitudes seem

⁵ This pattern of responses has been documented for contemporary Mexico by Carrier (1977). The distinction between "masculine" and "feminine" homosexual roles seems to be limited to societies where gender distinctions are generally important as social categories. Some evidence suggests that homosexual relations and male transvestism are more acceptable in societies where the sexual division of labor is low, male dominance is weak or nonexistent, and personality distinctions among the sexes are neither pronounced nor linked to sexually based role categories (Hill 1935; Munroe, Whiting, and Hally 1969; Levy 1973; Kluckhohn and Leighton 1976). This comes as no surprise: we should expect the sex of one's sexual partner to be relatively unimportant in such societies.

⁶ We are grateful to Michel Foucault for calling this text to our attention.

⁷ Thus Dover (1978, p. 16) states, "The reciprocal desire of partners belonging to the same age-category is virtually unknown in Greek homosexuality," but some of the vase paintings he reproduces in his plates do show same-age homosexual encounters.

to have centered on effeminacy, coercion, the seduction of minors, and the participation of citizens, but not foreigners or slaves, in prostitution. There was probably no law against homosexuality *per se* until fairly late in the Empire.⁸

Apparently the Romans did share the role stereotypes of the Greeks. According to Boswell,

a very strong bias appears to have existed against passive sexual behavior on the part of an adult male citizen. Noncitizen adults (e.g., foreigners, slaves) could engage in such behavior without loss of status, as could Roman youths, provided the relationship was voluntary and nonmercenary. . . . But if an adult citizen openly indulged in such behavior, he was viewed with scorn. Apart from general questions of gender expectations and sexual differentiation, the major cause of this prejudice appears to have been a popular association of sexual passivity with political impotence. Those who most commonly played the passive role in intercourse were boys, women, and slaves—all persons excluded from the power structure. Often they did so under duress, economic or physical; and the idea that a Roman citizen should be exploited in this way evoked a particular horror among Romans who prided themselves on their control of the world around them. [1980, pp. 74–75]

Similar patterns of role differentiation in the acceptability of homosexuality prevailed among the Germanic tribes (Bremmer 1980), in feudal Japan (Karlen 1971, p. 231), in the Moslem Middle East (Coon 1931, pp. 110–11; Patai 1973; Westermarck 1926; Hodgson 1974, pp. 145–46), among the Azande in Africa (Evans-Pritchard 1970), and among the Papuans and Sambia of New Guinea (Williams 1969; Herdt 1981). The accounts of the conflict between Horus and Seth in Egyptian mythology (Bullough 1976, pp. 64–66) and the middle Assyrian laws against the spreading of false rumors concerning passive homosexuality (Pritchard 1955, p. 181) suggest that similar attitudes were held in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Although Livy reports that male homosexual intercourse was part of the Bacchic rites in the early Roman republic, little is known about these ceremonies. However, in the ancient Near East, homosexual prostitution was a feature of the established religious cults (2 Kings 23:7; Driver 1895, p. 264; Selbie 1902, p. 559; Becker 1964; Bullough 1976, pp. 51–58). Though suppressed periodically by those loyal to the worship of Jehovah, cult prostitution—heterosexual and homosexual—was never eliminated permanently in the biblical period.

The early Mesopotamian law codes (Sumerian, Babylonian) make no mention of homosexuality; the Hittite code prohibits only father-son incest

⁸ The history of this legislation remains controversial; in particular, the interpretation given to the statutes of 342 and 390 A.D. is currently under debate; compare Boswell (1980, pp. 123–24) with Lauritsen (1981).

(Friedrich 1971, pp. 83, 113–14); and the middle Assyrian code forbids only the homosexual rape of a neighbor.⁹

The Spread of Asceticism

This broad acceptance of homosexuality in the ancient Mediterranean world ended in late antiquity with the spread of an asceticism hostile to all forms of sexual pleasure, including homosexuality. This asceticism was associated typically with philosophies or religions based on dualistic oppositions of good and evil, spirit and flesh, male and female.

Ascetic attitudes toward sexuality contrast radically with those usually found in primitive agricultural societies. The religions in these societies often feature an opposition between male and female principles which may well reflect a social antagonism between the sexes stemming from a sexual division of labor but does not assert the superiority or triumph of either principle. In the context of plant and animal reproduction this would be ludicrous. What is found instead is a unity in opposition, often symbolized by androgynous, hermaphroditic, or transvestite gods (Eliade 1964; Campbell 1970; Harding 1976). Sexual pleasure is valued positively; the phallic symbol itself may be worshiped (Knight 1786; Stone 1927; Vangaard 1972) and male homosexual intercourse regarded as a means of incorporating into the young the strength and vigor of the inserter and of encouraging a young person's growth (Westermarck 1926; Schieffelin 1976). In antiquity, even where the relationships between men and women were more patriarchal than equal and the economy was not exclusively agricultural, sexual pleasure was valued positively.

The processes that gave rise to dualistic world views and antisexual ideologies differed in detail and timing in different parts of the Mediterranean world. Before turning to these details, we note four developments that occurred throughout the entire region.

1. The growth of long-distance trade and imperial expansion (the Hellenistic kingdoms, the Roman Empire) brought about increased contact among adherents of different religions. This led to syncretism but also fostered skepticism about traditional pantheons and their associated rites, including fertility cults whose worship included homosexuality. It also favored the development of transnational monotheistic religions.

2. As large cities grew and became important administrative and reli-

⁹ The standard translations (Driver and Miles 1935, p. 391; Cardascia 1969, pp. 133–34) of the relevant passages are misleading in suggesting that the prohibition extended to all homosexual acts. The verb used, *na-ku*, carries connotations of force and coercion that these translators overlook. The penalty specified (homosexual rape followed by castration) would make no sense if the prohibition applied to all forms of homosexuality. We are grateful to Robert Stieglitz for clarifying the translation.

gious centers, the cultural significance of the agricultural and fertility themes expressed by the polytheistic religions was weakened.

3. The larger scale of politics in the kingdoms and empires reduced popular participation in politics, giving rise to political estrangement, passivity, helplessness, and withdrawal.

4. Catastrophic wars and conquests so shook the national existence of the various Mediterranean societies that all sense of confidence and certainty about the world was shattered, leading many to withdraw from mundane concerns to lives of contemplation or spirituality.

For the Hebrews, dualistic and ascetic tendencies became prominent during the Second Commonwealth, following the return from the Babylonian exile. At this time the worshipers of Jehovah formed an urbanized community that had just gone through the shock of conquest and captivity; they were emotionally ready for asceticism. Epstein indicates that it was in this period that nazaretic vows of celibacy became popular and that rigorous regulation of sexual expression was introduced, a drastic departure from earlier custom (1967, pp. 6–11). Bullough (1973, p. 75) indicates that Hebrew literature written between the Babylonian exile and the Roman conquest viewed sexual desire as man's greatest weakness (in the Talmudic period, when Jews enjoyed greater security, there was a more positive view of sex).

The only general prohibitions against male homosexuality in Hebrew scripture appear in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 (in addition, Deut. 23:18 prohibits male and female cult prostitution). Scholars have dated the Holiness Code in Leviticus, of which this passage is a part, as postexilic, and concluded that it was probably written in Judea, not in Babylonia¹⁰ (Eissfeldt 1965, pp. 238–39; Talmon 1970, p. 159; Epstein 1967, p. 136).

Although the shock of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 (Grant 1966, p. 27) must have reinforced an ascetic outlook, it was not unknown before this. Many Essene groups of the time practiced celibacy. The recently published text of the Temple Scroll of the Qumran community, probably composed in the 2d century B.C., calls for a reconstituted Jerusalem in which all residents were to remain sexually continent (Milgrom 1978).

¹⁰ The dating of the Holiness Code in Leviticus is no longer as certain as it once was. Early in this century, following the discovery of the Hammurabi Code, many textual parallels led scholars to suppose that the Leviticus laws derived from Babylonian sources. Now we know that similar codes were in effect throughout the Near East. This makes the dating uncertain and controversial. It is quite likely that the Leviticus prohibition of homosexuality had earlier sources, the most obvious being the middle Assyrian law code, inscribed on tablets dating from the 12th century. However, the Leviticus prohibition is broader in scope and specifies a different penalty. Our analysis favors a late date for the present form of the Leviticus prohibition. We are grateful to Robert Stieglitz for a discussion of the problems of establishing the dates of the Leviticus laws.

In Greece, as production was increasingly carried out by slaves, manual labor and, by extension, the material world became discredited, providing the social basis for a philosophical dualism asserting a radical dichotomy between mind and body, good and evil.¹¹ A more specifically ascetic orientation can be traced to the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War, the formation of the Hellenistic kingdoms (which were at war almost continuously), and their eventual conquest by Rome.

Pre-Christian Greek philosophers responded to the uncertainty of the times by attempting to renounce worldly cares and pursuits. Thus Epicurean communities sought deliverance from the concerns of everyday life in avoiding marriage and children (Randall 1970, pp. 24–31), while the Pythagoreans tried to escape from sexual desire, which they considered evil (Bullough 1973, p. 107). To bring the passions under the control of reason, Hellenistic cults and philosophers adopted programs of self-imposed deprivation and hardship. In the 1st century A.D., Epictetus sought to accomplish the same goal through the voluntary repression of desire (Fairweather 1924, p. 18; Hatch 1957, p. 147).

The repudiation of pleasure because it prevented the attainment of salvation or distracted the mind from philosophical contemplation did not necessarily entail total sexual abstinence. A neo-Pythagorean treatise of the 1st century B.C. permitted sexual intercourse for procreation, though not for pleasure (Bullough 1973, pp. 109–10; 1975, p. 170). Other contemporary writings, including those of Philo of Alexandria, stated similar views. An immediate corollary to Philo's rejection of sexual pleasure (as well as to his neo-Platonist dualism, which was hostile to effeminacy in men) was a sharply negative view of homosexuality.¹²

As governmental administration in the Hellenistic kingdoms and Roman Empire became bureaucratic and impersonal, and national or imperial in scope, city politics atrophied. By the 3d century A.D., private donations for public buildings dropped dramatically, a mark of a decline in civic spirit among the wealthy. A malaise set in among the Roman upper classes, paving the way for Greek philosophy, and so Stoic and neo-Platonist doctrines

¹¹ An additional factor, suggested to us by Nicky Spiller, may have been an intensification of male domination, which, according to Slater (1971), occurred shortly before the classical age. When male domination appears or is strengthened, the ideology justifying the sexual division of labor is likely to embody invidious dichotomies and equations, such as mental activities (= male, superior) vs. physical activities (= female, inferior). We note in passing that Hindu, Buddhist, and Persian sources for Greek dualism have been asserted by many scholars over the years but have never been established definitively.

¹² Boswell (1980, p. 128–30) points out that dualistic philosophies such as Stoicism did not necessarily require hostility toward homosexuality; in fact, dualism was compatible with amoral hedonism as well as with asceticism. That dualism was more often associated with ascetic practices must be attributed to the social context, which excluded hedonism for much of the population.

spread among the educated (Barker 1966, p. 11; Jones 1966, pp. 24, 121, 128, 279; Brown 1978, p. 48).

The old Roman religion based on agricultural rites declined in Rome itself (though not in the countryside) despite politically motivated governmental efforts to revive it. Oriental mystery religions won converts by promising immortality and union with God through initiation rituals and personal purity. Denial of the body and its impulses was a major dimension of purity in these religions. By 100 A.D., ascetic currents were visible features of Roman religious culture (Randall 1970, pp. 100–106).

The civil wars and invasions of the 3d century can only have strengthened these ascetic tendencies, but the precise influences of these events have never been traced in detail. However, loosely organized groups of ascetic aristocrats leading lives of chastity and prayer could be found in Rome before A.D. 300 and are known to have existed throughout the 4th century (Rousseau 1978, pp. 80–81). The renewed military threat posed by the Goths' successful invasion of Rome and seizure of Aquileia in 401 greatly enhanced the appeal of ascetic versions of Christianity and led to a flurry of conversions (Rousseau 1978, pp. 80–81, 90).

Early Christian views of sexuality were shaped by both Jewish and Greek thinking. The Hellenistic influence, already important in Judea before the Roman conquest, became even stronger afterward and was one of the most important influences on early Christian theology (Fairweather 1924, pp. 220–301; Jones 1966, p. 26).

The economic crisis of the 3d century gave asceticism a wider appeal in the Empire's eastern provinces, particularly in Egypt and Syria. The heavy burden of taxation and the sharpening of class divisions in peasant villages played havoc with middle-class aspirations. Ascetic doctrines that advocated sexual abstinence and withdrawal from worldly affairs appealed to this class particularly by offering a strategy for coping with desires frustrated by uncontrollable external conditions (Vööbius 1960a, p. 120; Brown 1978, pp. 31, 82–85).

The most prominent themes in the Christian ascetic literature of this period reflect these experiences. Essays in praise of virginity, written for male readers, expand on the cares and worries associated with the support of wife and children. Emphasis is placed on curbing anger and controlling the appetites for food and sex. In tones of unrelieved pessimism, the ascetic literature portrays the world as a vale of suffering and disappointed hopes. Secular sources of happiness are described as inevitably transitory. Deliverance was attainable only through renunciation of the world and oneself (de Mendieta 1955; Saint Gregory of Nyssa 1967; Brown 1978, pp. 86–88).

The influence of these ideas appears to have been wide. According to a chronicler of asceticism in the Syrian Orient, in the latter part of the 4th century "great masses turned to the monastic life, contributing to the de-

population of the communities in the villages and towns, a process which took on steadily growing dimensions" (Vööbius 1960a, p. 122). It is estimated that in Egypt as many as 2% or 3% of the population may have belonged to ascetic Christian monasteries (Brady 1952, p. 92). Although the bulk of the converts to Christianity were from the lower middle classes who were hardest hit by economic catastrophe (Jones 1966, p. 26; Knowles 1969, p. 14), some of the most prominent came from well-to-do families. The contrast between the certainty of salvation and the uncertainties of secular political careers figured in the conversions of Ambrose, Jerome, and members of Augustine's circle, among others (Rousseau 1978, p. 93).

Early Christian writings were generally antagonistic to homosexuality. However, this antagonism was not restricted to Christian thought. Although John Chrysostom was among the most vehement of the early fathers of the church in his denunciations of homosexuality (Boswell 1980, pp. 359–60), his somewhat older contemporary Libanius, a pagan born in Antioch, expressed similar feelings with equal forcefulness (Jones 1961, p. 972). Boswell notes that in the West, the Christian church was the only organized entity to survive the German invasions. It thus became "the conduit through which the narrower morality of the later Empire reached Europe. It was not, however, the author of this morality. The dissolution of the urban society of Rome and the ascendance of less tolerant political and ethical leadership occasioned a steady restriction of sexual freedom which transcended credal boundaries. . . . All the organized philosophical traditions of the West grew increasingly intolerant of sexual pleasure under the later Empire, and it is often impossible to distinguish Christian ethical precepts from those of pagan philosophy during the period" (1980, pp. 127–28). We differ with Boswell only in seeing economic and political developments, rather than the deurbanization they occasioned, as the precipitants of these trends.

Moreover, Christian hostility to homosexuality was not directed against that alone, but toward all forms of sexual activity. Although the New Testament did not look favorably on sexual expression,¹³ the leaders of the early church gave sex much greater attention and rejected it far more passionately and completely. Virtually all the church fathers—Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome—praised virginity and looked on sex with horror (de Mendieta 1955; Dodds 1965). Tertullian regarded unchastity as worse than death (Bulough 1973, p. 98). In the early Syrian church, only unmarried Christians could be baptized (Vööbius 1951), and some Western bishops of the second

¹³ Rev. 14:4 describes a procession of the redeemed as consisting of virgins not defiled with women; in a more influential passage in 1 Cor. 7:12, Saint Paul advises that "it is better to marry than to burn." Celibacy was better than marriage, but the latter was clearly preferable to sin, and thus was not sinful in itself.

century made continence compulsory for church members (Grant 1970, p. 271). A number of Christian writers, including Eustathius of Sebastia, a bishop of the mid-4th century, held that married people could not be saved. Augustine considered sexual pleasure within marriage to be sinful, even though intercourse was nonetheless redeemed by the desire for children and by the sacramental character of marriage (Erickson 1976). The 2d-century apocryphal Acts of the Apostles maintained that married persons should refrain from sex¹⁴ (Davies 1980, pp. 32–33), and “spiritual” (celibate) marriages were not uncommon among early Christians.

A number of the Gnostic versions of Christianity held equally negative views of sex. The Marcionite communities in Persia and Mesopotamia were celibate, and the followers of Valentinus—the best known of these was Origen—castrated themselves. This practice became common in Syria and Mesopotamia (Vööbius 1951, pp. 15–16).

As the Christian church was uncentralized administratively prior to the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 313, no single doctrine of sexual conduct prevailed throughout the entire church. Instead, each bishop exercised absolute authority in his own diocese, influenced only by the moral authority and persuasiveness of his fellow bishops. However, by the middle of the 3d century, church leaders began to oppose excessively rigid discipline, knowing that it would hinder recruitment and lead to the loss of members (Grant 1970, p. 221). By the 4th century, church councils forbade self-castration (Bullough 1973, p. 100), and by the late 4th to early 5th centuries, perfectionism, including sexual abstinence as a requirement of church membership, had been clearly rejected. The policy that emerged was one of accepting sexuality only within marriage.

As Bullough (1973, p. 111) points out, the early church competed with rival sects, including Gnostic cults, for members. The success of the orthodox church may have been due partly to the way it reconciled the public demand for asceticism and personal purity with the necessities of organizational survival. The Gnostic sects’ requirement that all members remain celibate might have discouraged potential adherents and if practiced by orthodox Christians would have prevented the growth of the sect by member procreation. In contrast, the orthodox requirement of sexual abstinence only for a clerical elite facilitated organizational growth and at the same time provided an ideological basis for hierarchical authority within the church. The establishment of confession and penances also helped to retain members, structure lines of authority, and evoke feelings of gratitude when violations of rules imposed by the church itself were forgiven.¹⁵

¹⁴ In addition, these works condemn the consumption of meat and wine and the ownership of personal possessions (Davies 1980, p. 12).

¹⁵ We are indebted to Caroline Persell for this last observation. Further speculation about the factors that contributed to the church’s organizational success can be found in Pagels (1979).

That Christian opposition to homosexuality reflected a broader rejection of all sexual experiences not intended to lead to procreation within marriage is evident in the even-handed treatment of heterosexual and homosexual offenses in the writings of the early church fathers. For example, Saint Basil of Nyssa, the founder of Christian monasticism, wrote in 375 to another bishop, "He who is guilty of unseemliness with males will be under discipline for the same time as adulterers." Saint Gregory of Nyssa explains the reason for this in a canonical letter written to the bishop of Melitene in 390: both heterosexual adultery and homosexual intercourse are unlawful pleasures (McNeill 1976, p. 79; Gauthier 1977).

The canons adopted in 309 by the Council of Elvira (now Granada) make clear that these views were not idiosyncratic. So far as is known, Elvira was the first council to formulate canons for the regulation of sexuality; 37 of the 81 canons adopted concerned this topic. The one dealing with homosexuality specified that men who engaged in sexual relations with boys should not be admitted to communion even at death.¹⁶ Other canons specified the same rigorous penalties for adulterous women and women involved in pandering and prostitution (Laeuchli 1972, pp. 126–35). A number of the early penitentials also prescribe the same penances for homosexual and heterosexual offenses.¹⁷

Roman criminal law reflected a repressive stance toward homosexuality even before the Empire became Christian. By the 3d century, male homosexual prostitution was illegal in the West (Bullough 1976, p. 332; Boswell 1980, p. 170). Further legislation was adopted in the 4th century. The precise scope of this legislation remains a matter of debate, but it is clear that some forms of homosexual activity had become capital offenses by the end of the century.¹⁸ Legislation promulgated by Justinian in the early 6th century reiterated the death penalty for male homosexual repeat offenders.

¹⁶ Not too much should be made of the restriction of the prohibition to boys. The Council was not legislating a general code for sexual conduct; it was taking up concrete cases that had been presented to the Spanish bishops (Laeuchli 1972, p. 101). Keith Thomas (1980) observes, Boswell notwithstanding, that most homosexual relationships involved adult-juvenile pairs.

¹⁷ This is true of the 6th-century Book of David and the 7th-century penitentials of Cummean and of Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury. However, the 7th-century Penitential of Columban and the 8th-century Burgundian Penitential treated homosexual infractions more severely than heterosexual ones (McNeill and Gamer 1938; Bullough 1976, p. 361).

¹⁸ Bailey (1955, p. 70) suggests that a law promulgated by the Emperors Constans and Constantius (sons of Constantine) in 342 may have been "facetious" but does not explain why a law with facetious intent would have been issued; Boswell (1980, p. 123) holds that the law outlaws homosexual marriages only and Lauritsen (1981) that it deals with all male homosexual acts. Similar disagreement surrounds the scope of a statute of the emperors Theodosius, Valentinian, and Arcadian. Boswell (1980, p. 124) claims that it refers only to "forcing or selling males into prostitution," while Bullough (1976, p. 332) and Lauritsen (1981) see it as a more general condemnation of passive

For our purposes, the precise scope of this legislation is secondary; the extent to which the general population shared the broad sentiments of the legislation is of greater interest but not easy to ascertain. The response of the population of Thessalonika in Greece in A.D. 390 to the arrest of a popular charioteer¹⁹ on homosexuality charges (they rioted and killed a Gothic officer of the Empire) is often taken as evidence that the edict of Theodosius flew in the face of popular sentiment (Crompton 1978; Lauritsen 1981), but we do not know that feelings were the same everywhere in the Empire, or indeed that the Thessalonikans would have responded similarly had the arrest involved a less popular figure.

The veneration of ascetics tells us that awe of sexual abstinence went beyond a tiny Church elite. Had there been a gross disparity between Christian ideals and popular values, conversions to Christianity before it became the official religion of the Empire would be puzzling. At the same time, the wording of the canons adopted at Elvira suggests that the bishops and presbyters realized many Christians were not living up to ideal Christian standards (Laeuchli 1972, pp. 101–2). We have no reason to think that the masses were obsessed with homosexuality. Even in the Patristic literature, it is not given great prominence. And the fact that the legislation of the 4th century was not enforced (a tax on male prostitutes was collected until the end of the 5th century) is good evidence that the repression of homosexuality was not a high priority for the government.

Since all Roman antihomosexual legislation from the 4th century on was introduced by Christian emperors, it has generally been assumed to have reflected Christian attitudes toward homosexuality. Boswell (1980) has criticized this assumption, arguing that Christians were unlikely to have been particularly antagonistic to homosexuality. His critics (Johansson 1981; Lauritsen 1981) have attempted to refute Boswell's arguments by producing evidence that the church was indeed hostile toward homosexuality, but they do not show that Christians were more intolerant than pagans of the same class. We simply do not know enough about attitudes among different strata or in different parts of the Empire to clarify this point.²⁰ What we do know is that homosexuality was not the only sexual

homosexuality. Of the two surviving texts for the act, only one mentions male brothels, and it is not evident that the reference is to coercion (see the translation Lauritsen provides, as well as Bullough [1976], p. 332).

¹⁹ The episode is usually assumed to have involved consensual homosexual activity and the arrest to have been a result of the Theodosian Constitution. But King states that the episode involved a rape of the Gothic officer and points out that it is uncertain whether the arrest came before or after the legislation (1960, pp. 68–69, 102–4). If the episode was in fact a rape, popular outrage at the arrest might have reflected antagonism to the Goths rather than acceptance of homosexuality.

²⁰ One might wonder why, if antihomosexual legislation was strictly religious in origin, it was not repealed by Julian the Apostate. During his short reign he attempted (though with very limited success) to undo the Christianization of the Empire.

offense singled out for severe treatment in late Roman legislation. Adultery was punished severely under the Antonine emperors (who were pagans) as well as under their successors; in the Justinian Code it was a capital offense (Laeuchli 1972, pp. 92–93; Boswell 1980, p. 171).

The Imagery of Homosexuality

Increasing intolerance was only one element of the shift in perceptions of homosexuality during late antiquity. For the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, love and lust were deplorable distractions from the *vita contemplativa* but had no profound moral connotations. The Patristic literature of the 4th and early 5th centuries shifted the focus by making virginity a major component of personal purity. Sexual abstinence replaced martyrdom as the prescribed means of imitating Christ (Malone 1950). Justinian's language is quite different. In his legislation, homosexuality threatens not the individual sinner but the entire community. His Novellae of A.D. 538 and A.D. 544 attribute earthquakes, famine, and pestilence to homosexuality (Bullough 1976, pp. 171–72).

These patterns are exactly those predicted by Mary Douglas's (1970) neo-Durkheimian analysis of the relationship between social organization and body experience. Douglas postulates a correspondence between the ways people experience their bodies and the ways they experience society. She goes on to conceptualize society in terms of two variables, group and grid. *Group* refers to the strength of identification with a group, *grid* to the existence and stability of formally recognized, differentiated social roles. Each of these variables can have high or low values in a given society or other collectivity.²¹

Where grid is high, Douglas argues, we should expect an affirmation of society and its institutions. Where, in addition, group is low, religious syncretism would be expected (since ideological boundaries that would stand in the way of external religious influences would be weak). Because formalized social roles imply that public behavior is generally subject to social control, we would not expect sexual expression to be uninhibited. But neither would we expect it to be denied or repressed altogether. Instead, we would expect it to be institutionalized through ritual, as in fertility ceremonies. This seems like a good description of the polytheistic agricultural societies of the ancient Near East and perhaps of Greece and Rome in their early stages.

Where group and grid are both weak, religion loses its social character and magical qualities and becomes personal. So does morality. The uni-

²¹ In the paragraphs that follow, we attempt to summarize Douglas's conclusions as best we can given the ambiguities of her text. In addition, we try to spell out more concretely than she the logical implications for sexual ideology of her analysis.

verse comes to be seen as benign (or, possibly, indifferent). The blurring and instability of social roles would lead to the weakening of social control over sexuality. Where the universe is conceived of as benign, individuals would feel relatively uninhibited sexually; where the universe is considered indifferent, sexuality may be subject to self-regulation but can take many forms. Classical and Hellenistic Greece, and Rome under the early Empire, provide reasonably good examples.

Where group is high and grid low, the most important social distinction is whether someone is inside or outside the group. Dualistic philosophies, ascetic life-styles, and doctrines of personal purity will prevail. A preoccupation with what goes in and out of the body will parallel the social concern with group boundaries. Here one will find deep personal anxieties connected with diet and sexuality. Lapses will be treated as sins and associated with the powers of evil in the universe.

The Christian church of the 3d and 4th centuries corresponds well to this description. Both persecution and the need to differentiate the new cult from paganism, Judaism, and heresy made group membership extremely important. According to Brown (1972, p. 134), "The Christian communities in the third and fourth centuries had grown up in precisely those classes of the great cities of the Mediterranean that were most exposed to fluidity and uncertainty." Indeed, Christians had an exceptionally high degree of mobility (Brown 1972, p. 135). And during these first few centuries, lines of authority in the church were still fluid and ambiguous. Other sources of identification—such as kinship, race, or town—were downgraded systematically within the church, which sought to transcend these categories (Brown 1978, pp. 56, 74).

Last, when grid and group are both high, we expect a "complex, regulative cosmos." Body control will be important because fixed social roles will be accompanied by strong social control. However, there will be less concern with intentionality or subjective states of mind and more with overt, visible behavior. Instead of ascetic doctrines of self-discipline and personal striving for spiritual perfection, elaborate ritualized codes will govern behavior. Violations will be seen less as personal blemishes and more as threats to the collectivity. The well-being of the entire community is jeopardized by the misbehavior of individual members, and as a result the deviant is conceived of as an outsider, an alien.

This is precisely the pattern seen in the Justinian Age. Two centuries earlier, Diocletian had attempted to fix people in their occupations and bind cultivators to the soil. In the West, barbarian invasions had led to the breakdown of an organized, imperial society; but in the East, where defenses against the invasions had been more successful, society remained "firm and well-ordered" (Barker 1966, p. 13) though threatened by border conflicts on several fronts. Disastrous earthquakes, droughts, fires, floods,

epidemics, and visitations of locusts, leading to destruction on an immense scale and enormous loss of life, added to the sense of personal insecurity (Vasiliev 1950, pp. 344–50). As noted earlier, the Justinian legislation explicitly linked homosexuality with these natural disasters. Regarding himself as responsible for the fate of the Eastern Empire, Justinian also enacted harsh legislation against heretics and non-Christian religion. His Novella 77, which proscribed homosexuality, also forbade “swearing and blasphemy” (Ure 1951, p. 62). In an attempt to earn God’s favor and bring prosperity to the Empire, he forbade clerics to gamble or go to the theater or the races. These laws and prohibitions cannot be dismissed as the idiosyncrasies of a caesaropapist ruler; the belief that “natural” disasters were a divine response to neglect or disobedience was extremely widespread among both pagans and Christians in the late Empire (Jones 1966, p. 321).

Although Douglas’s scheme appears simplistic and mechanical in its equation of bodily and social experience, it explains the sexual ideologies of late antiquity so well that we must take it quite seriously, at least as the starting point for further investigation.²²

FEUDALISM AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West, there is little reference to homosexuality in secular sources. With a single exception, the *Leges Barbarorum* of the German nations do not mention the subject.²³ Since the Germanic peoples probably did not stigmatize homosexuality, this is no surprise (Bremmer 1980; Boswell 1980, pp. 183–84). Alcuin, the 8th-century Anglo-Saxon scholar, deplored incest and adultery but not homosexuality. Apart from a capitulary of Charlemagne that imposed no penalty (Bullough 1976, p. 353; Boswell 1980, p. 177), secular legislation dealing with homosexuality simply does not exist. In sacred law, as previously noted, the penitentials often treated homosexuality on an equal footing with heterosexual offenses. Moreover, Boswell (1980, pp. 179–83) indicates that in practice penalties were often mitigated and that the penitentials themselves were not widely used. While some such officials were unequivocally

²² We note particularly the absence of any conception of class differentiation in the structuring of social experience (such as we argued is relevant to an understanding of the growth of asceticism in the Roman Empire of the 4th century), or of external anxiety-producing threats, such as occurred in 6th-century Byzantium. The medicalization of sexual deviance in late-19th-century England and America seems to lie outside the framework of the scheme.

²³ The exception is the Visigothic Code in Spain. This code reflects greater Roman influence than any of the other barbarian codes. For evidence that this Code does not simply reflect the influence of the Church, see Bachrach (1973) and Boswell (1980, pp. 174–77).

hostile to homosexuality,²⁴ there is reason to think that these sentiments were far from universal, even among the clergy.

Although we cannot be overly confident about conclusions based on very limited evidence about a period with few extant records, it seems unlikely that homosexuality was repressed vigorously during the early and high Middle Ages in western and central Europe. Latin poets of the 9th to 12th centuries wrote un-self-consciously of their homoerotic attachments (Herman 1976; Curtius 1953, pp. 114–16; Allen 1928, pp. 149–51). Many of these were monks (Boswell 1980, pp. 188–96). In early 12th-century England, Saint Anselm urged that ecclesiastical penances for homosexuality be moderated because “this sin has been so public that hardly anyone has blushed for it, and many, therefore, have plunged into it without realizing its gravity” (Ellis 1936, p. 40; Hyde 1970, p. 35). The prelate Jacques de Vitry described the city of Paris in 1230 as filled with sodomites (Karlen 1971), while in 13th-century Parma the nobleman Salimbene di Adamo wrote that homosexuality was common, particularly among clerks and scholars, as well as among nuns (Cleugh 1963, p. 91; Karlen 1971).

This comparative acceptance of homosexuality can be understood in the context of the medieval social order. The developments that had given rise to asceticism in late antiquity were now long past. The collapse of the Roman Empire had had a totally different meaning for the conquering German nations than for the defeated Roman population. The bureaucratic administration of a vast empire had been replaced by local government. The emerging decentralized feudal society had left the population better able to defend itself against the Norse, Hungarian, and Arab invasions and therefore less prone to withdrawal into passive asceticism. The urban lower and middle classes who had suffered in the economic collapse of the 4th century ceased to exist in a society of self-sufficient manors.

When social survival depends on combat carried on by men fighting as individuals or in small groups, as was the case in medieval warfare, personal traits associated with hand-to-hand military combat and its associated ethical code are culturally elevated and acquire erotic significance for men as well as women.²⁵ Bullough (1973, p. 165) notes that in the song of Roland, women appear only as shadowy, marginal figures: “The deepest

²⁴ Writing in the last half of the 9th century, Benedict Levita forged a capitulary of Charlemagne that gives the penalty for sodomy as burning (Boswell 1980, pp. 177–78, n. 30).

²⁵ According to C. A. Tripp (1975), similar processes are found in primitive societies. He indicates that in societies where the prowess of individual men in hunting or war is praised, the associated traits become eroticized and male homosexuality is found. On the other hand, in those societies where these male activities are carried on collectively and the participation of individual men receives no special recognition, homosexuality is absent, whether or not the culture proscribes homosexuality. Unfortunately Tripp fails to specify the sample of societies studied, the anthropological sources he consulted, and the coding procedures utilized in the analysis.

signs of affection in the poem, as well as in similar ones, appear in the love of man for man, the mutual love of warriors who die together fighting against odds, and the affection between the vassal and the lord or within the church, between two clergy, usually an older and younger.”

The arrangements for training knights would have tended to encourage homosexuality. Bullough (1976, pp. 399–400; see also Duby [1968] and Verbruggen [1977], pp. 28–29) notes that “usually, the young noble youth was incorporated into a group of friends who were taught to love one another as brothers, who were led by an older man, and whose every waking moment was spent in each other’s company. Sometimes these groups stayed together for as long as 20 years, from age 11 or 12 until 30 or so, when they were supposed to marry. Sometimes marriage was further delayed, for eligible women were not particularly plentiful.” According to Duby (1977, p. 115), within these groups “morals were far from strict. . . . When Roger and his companions left the household of Chester . . . [in northwest France of the 12th century] Ordericus Vitalis describes them coming back *Quasi di flammis Sodomiae*.” Duby notes that other contemporaries also portrayed these groups of youth as having “depraved habits.”

In addition, the monastic orders of knights (such as the Templars and the Teutonic Knights) were sworn to strict chastity. Although the early 14th-century accusation linking the Templars with rampant homosexuality may have been fabricated, the association between homosexuality and individual knightly combat elsewhere (Japan before the Meiji restoration, classical Greece, the military courts of the amirs in the Middle Period of the Islamic world) makes it plausible that homosexuality was common and accepted in the early and high Middle Ages among knights and nobility in Europe and England.

Since the relationship between a lord and his vassals was personal (the ceremony of homage and fealty culminated with a kiss on the mouth between lord and vassal), it would have been strengthened, not weakened, by erotic attachment.²⁶ Thus there would have been no need to discourage homosexuality in order to avoid problems for the dominant forms of social relations.

Boswell (1980, pp. 207–66) demonstrates that an urban-based male homosexual subculture apart from the knightly classes flourished in the towns of the 11th and 12th centuries, particularly, but not exclusively, among clergy and university students (who were often clerics). We will comment below on the reasons for this association between clergy and homosexuality.

²⁶ This contrasts with bureaucratic forms of domination, which are expected to be impersonal and universalistic. Sexual relationships within the bureaucracy—whether heterosexual or homosexual—might tend to interfere with the universalism of bureaucratic decision making. The medieval French tale of the love of two knights, Amis and Amile, which Boswell (1980, pp. 239–40) summarizes, is consistent with our claim.

Ecclesiastical denunciations of homosexuality began to reappear in the 11th century, with homosexuality among the clergy becoming a target of persistent criticism. Peter Damian, the energetic church reformer, led the attack with his mid-century castigation of ecclesiastical sinfulness, the *Liber Gommothianus*, which urged Pope Leo IX to impose the maximum penances allowed in the penitentials for all homosexual violations regardless of age and circumstances—a proposal that Leo rejected. In Alain of Lille's 12th-century *De Planctu Naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*), the goddess Natura condemns homosexuality along with other sexual vices, and in the following century, Scholastic theologians characterized homosexuality as a sin "contrary to nature" (Bullough 1976, pp. 378–82; Boswell 1980, pp. 303–32).

In an atmosphere of growing hostility, the Council of London (1102) decreed that clerics guilty of sodomy were to be degraded, while those who did not desist were to be anathematized. The Council of Nablus, held in the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1120, specified that sodomists be burned, although the penalty was mitigated for those who renounced the vice voluntarily, and canons with less rigorous penalties were adopted at the Third Lateran Council in 1179. Provisions derived from those of the Lateran Council appear in the local legislation of a number of 13th-century synods (Bullough 1976, pp. 383–84; Goodich 1979, pp. 41–46; Boswell 1980, p. 281).

Beginning in the mid-13th century these sentiments were embodied in secular legislation, which betrays knowledge of the recently revived Justinian Code by its prescription of the death penalty for sodomy.²⁷ Thus a customal (collection of customary law; its provisions were not always traditional) prepared in Orleans around 1260 required that third offender sodomists be burned. Similar penalties are indicated in Beaumanoir's *Les Coutumes de Beauvaisis* written in 1283 (Philippe de Remi 1842, p. 413), in the *Très Ancien Coutume de Bretagne*, the *Coutumes de Touraine-Anjou*, and the forged *Etablissements* of Louis IX (Goodich 1979, pp. 77–78).

²⁷ The meaning of the term "sodomy" is usually not spelled out in detail in this legislation, but often went beyond homosexuality. A 15th-century handbook for confessors includes male and female homosexual intercourse and heterosexual intercourse "outside of the fit vessel" in its definition of sodomy (Bullough 1976, p. 381); in the 16th century, the Roman penologist Farrinaci reports that married couples were burned at the stake for sodomy (Becker 1964, p. 119). Heterosexual sodomy was prosecuted in early 16th-century Florence, and preachers denounced this practice regularly (personal communication from Gene Brucker). Men tried for bestiality in 16th- and 17th-century France were also prosecuted as sodomists (Hernandez 1920). The close association between religious heresy and sodomy in some of the codes (see, e.g., Philippe de Remi 1842, 2:413) raises the possibility that the authors of the code intended the death penalty only for those cases of sodomy in which the perpetrators were involved with heretical movements. In France this association had been established with regard to the Albigensians, who shunned procreation but may have tolerated forms of intercourse with no potential procreative result (Russell 1965, p. 203).

Parallel developments are traceable outside France. The late 13th-century *Las Siete Partidas*, promulgated by Alfonso X of Castile and Leon, prescribed castration followed by stoning to death for homosexuals (Karlen 1971, pp. 89, 289); Ferdinand and Isabella changed the penalty to burning in 1497. In England, two treatises dealing with the administration of royal law dating from around 1290 assert that sodomy should be punished by death; *The Mirror of Justices*, attributed to Andrew Horn, specifies burying alive as the penalty, as does *Fleta*. However, neither work is entirely trustworthy.²⁸

In addition to this body of royal legislation, the municipal statutes of the communes in Northern Italy in the 13th century specify rigorous penalties for sodomy (Goodich 1979, pp. 79–83). Although antisodomy legislation was generally not enforced vigorously,²⁹ prosecutions and executions were carried out sporadically in the late Middle Ages outside England.

These developments can be attributed plausibly to two distinct but related sources: church-state conflict and class conflict. With regard to the former, we will argue that the growing preoccupation with homosexuality was an indirect and partly unanticipated consequence of the attempts of church reformers in the mid to late Middle Ages to establish sacerdotal celibacy. The psychological conflicts engendered by forced celibacy, we suggest, resulted in an irrational hostility toward homosexuality among both clergy and laity. With regard to the latter, we will contend (along with Goodich) that a popular hostility toward homosexuality was part of a

²⁸ Plucknett (1956, p. 267) describes the *Mirror* as "certainly the most fantastic work in our legal literature. The author knew some Anglo-Saxon laws (and fabricated many more). . . . The work never circulated during the Middle Ages, but was believed to have been genuine when discovered in the sixteenth century." In any event, the *Mirror*, while expressing horror at sodomy, also forbids bringing accusations to court. *Fleta* is a more useful work but still not trustworthy on every point (Plucknett 1922, p. 80; Ogg 1925, pp. 191–97). The work was not a code, as Goodich (1979, p. 77) and Boswell (1980, p. 292) seem to believe (Goodich also erroneously reports the penalty as burning), but a work of jurisprudence. It epitomizes Bracton and attempts to bring Bracton up to date by taking into account the legislation of Edward I, and draws on other contemporary writings, as well as on Roman law. The passage dealing with sodomy does not appear in Bracton, and there is no statutory basis for it, even though the statutes of Edward I are known to us. No sodomy cases are recorded in the voluminous *Notebooks* from that period or any later one. No other legal commentator refers to such a prohibition, and Hanawalt (1979, p. 4) reports that in the first half of the 14th century sodomy cases were handled in the church courts. The text of the 16th-century sodomy statute (25 Henry 8, c. 6, 1533) states that no one had been punished for this offense for a long time. These considerations suggest that the author of *Fleta* is in error about English legal practice of his time. However, our argument does not rest on this conclusion.

²⁹ For example, Bullough (1976, pp. 391, 410) notes the lack of evidence that anyone was executed or even convicted of sodomy in the secular French courts during the reigns of Louis IX, Philippe IV, and Philippe V, even though the *Etablissements de Saint Louis* specified the death penalty. In the Occitan, male homosexuality appears to have been a common feature of town life, ignored until the Inquisition initiated a wave of persecution in the early 14th century (Le Roy Ladurie, 1975, pp. 9–21, pp. 209–15).

broader middle-class morality that became increasingly forceful in its opposition to a life-style of luxury and excess as class divisions widened.

The mid-11th-century papacy was engaged in a struggle for political supremacy with the Holy Roman Emperor. The church reformers who led this struggle hoped to create a theocratic empire by tightening the organizational discipline of the church so that priests' loyalties would be owed to the church, undiluted by allegiances to secular authorities or by affection for wives or concubines. Doing away with lay investiture and priestly marriages was thus an item of high priority in church reform.

The tendency toward hereditary offices in the feudalism of the time added to the reformers' determination to end priestly marriages. If the priesthood had become a hereditary benefice, the church would have lost much of its control over priests (Lea 1884, p. 193; Brooke 1972, p. 72), just as, later, in 18th-century France, royal authority was frustrated by the endemic sale and inheritance of governmental offices. Thus, these measures were taken by church officials as part of a program to strengthen the hierarchical command structure.

Other considerations also lay behind the campaign for celibacy. The church was becoming wealthy, and its accumulation of riches would have slowed if priests married and transmitted property intended for the Church to their offspring (Macdonald 1932, p. 28; Lea 1884, p. 64).

To strengthen the moral authority of the church, reformers hoped to draw a sharper line between the moral purity of the priesthood and the less restrained—and less pure—lives of the laity. Clerical marriage tended to blur the distinctions between clergy and laity. However, the theology of the time was placing greater emphasis on the sacraments, and thus attention was drawn to the sacredness of the person who administered them. Celibacy was considered to increase the priest's resemblance to Christ (Brooke 1972, p. 73; 1975, p. 254). Popular discontent with clergy who were married, had concubines, or patronized prostitutes became sufficiently widespread to create a legitimacy crisis for the church that could be resolved only through a restoration of the early requirement—never formally abandoned but virtually neglected in practice—of priestly celibacy.³⁰ Indeed, the reformers expressed the fear that the church would be brought into disrepute by clerical immorality (Macdonald 1932, p. 29; Brooke 1975, pp. 237, 254; Little 1978).

In carrying out this program, Pope Leo IX presided over a Council at Mainz (1049) which condemned simony (the purchase of ecclesiastical offices) and priestly marriages (Lea 1884). Popes Alexander II and Greg-

³⁰ Clerical marriage had, of course, been prohibited much earlier, e.g., by Pope Leo I in the 5th century. However, the prohibition had been weakened by the passage of time. By the beginning of the second millennium, clerical marriage had become common, and some authorities explicitly permitted it or else qualified the prohibition (Macdonald 1932, p. 29; Brooke 1972, p. 84; 1975, p. 254).

ory VII ordered priests who were guilty of fornication not to say mass and excommunicated Henry IV in the struggle over lay investiture. Papal decrees against attending masses celebrated by clergy who were married or had concubines were issued in 1059, 1063, and 1074. The First Lateran Council reiterated this prohibition in 1139, and Pope Innocent III took up the issue again in 1215 (Russell 1965, p. 7; Brooke 1972, pp. 75–77; Moore 1977, p. 53). Sons of priests were declared ineligible for the clergy (Schimmelpfennig 1979). The mendicant orders (Dominicans, Franciscans) were created at the beginning of the 13th century to assist the papacy in carrying out these reforms.

The celibacy rule met with strenuous and sometimes violent resistance from clerics and their wives, to the point where some Italian bishops “did not dare to announce the decrees” (Schimmelpfennig 1979; see also Wishart 1900, pp. 182–86; Brooke 1972, p. 84). For this reason, enforcement was spotty and at first only partly effective. Yet by the latter half of the 13th century clerical marriage had been eliminated to a large extent (Brooke 1972, pp. 78–99).

The elimination of heterosexual outlets for priests as a result of the celibacy rule could only have fostered the development of homoerotic feelings. Sexual experience is not merely a form of tension release or a source of physical pleasure; it is also a way of establishing and maintaining emotional intimacy with others (Benjamin 1978). In some people—the proportion is not known, but is probably substantial—and in some circumstances, the psychological need for such relationships is stronger than the orientation toward partners of a particular sex. Thus when a group of people is deprived of the opportunity to satisfy the need for emotional intimacy heterosexually, some members of the group can be expected to seek the fulfillment of that need homosexually.³¹

This is especially likely to happen in single-sex milieus, where contact with members of the opposite sex is entirely cut off. High levels of homosexual behavior have, in fact, been associated with prisons, English boarding schools, and Christian, Tibetan, Buddhist, and Islamic monasteries, as well as with some traditional Moslem societies, the classical Greek city-state, and Puritan New England, where heterosexual contacts were suppressed or curtailed (Lea 1884; May 1931, p. 247; Prince Peter 1963, p. 458; Brunel 1955, pp. 203–4).

The association between homosexuality and Christian monasticism dates back to the early history of coenobitic communities in late antiquity. Ref-

³¹ We are not claiming that all or even most homosexual behavior reflects the absence of opportunities for heterosexual outlets. However, it is implicit in our position that choice of sexual partners is not always fixed permanently in early childhood but is subject to social influence in adolescence and adulthood. It follows that where homosexual attachments are strongly discouraged we will find a correspondingly higher level of heterosexual involvements.

erences to homosexuality are almost completely absent from the earliest monastic literature, but in subsequent generations, measures to curb it received increasing attention (Bury 1923, 2:412; Vööbius 1960*b*; Chitty 1966, pp. 66–67). This pattern suggests that it was the monastic environment itself that evoked high levels of homosexual attraction among the monks, not selective recruitment (which, given the asceticism of the monastic movement, would have been unlikely).

The homophile poetry and letters of passionate male friendship and love written by 12th-century clergy to one another (Boswell 1980) can in part be attributed plausibly to the closing off of heterosexual relationships by the Gregorian reform movement. The attribution of homosexuality to university students of the time is equally understandable when we recall that medieval university faculty and students were clerics.³²

The church could tolerate priestly involvement in homosexual relationships no more than it could tolerate heterosexual involvement. Scripture was interpreted as condemning all homosexuality, and Patristic authority was unequivocal in its denunciation of homosexuality. The legitimization needs of the church would have been threatened by acceptance of any form of sexual expression on the part of the clergy, and the reformers' desire to build a priestly army unencumbered by personal or worldly attachments was inconsistent with homosexuality in its ranks.

It is only to be expected, then, that the extirpation of homosexuality among the clergy was on the reformers' agenda. Peter Damian, mentioned earlier for his vitriolic attacks on clerical homosexuality, was firm in his opposition to simony, clerical marriage, and concubinage (Brooke 1972, p. 72; Little 1978, p. 72). Anselm, who fought with William Rufus and Henry I over lay investitures, sought the Council of London's decree against homosexuality (Thomas 1980). Pope Innocent III, who continued Gregory VII's policy of seeking papal supremacy over the state, initiated an investigation into clerical sodomy in Mâcon in 1203 (Goodich 1979, p. 17). When Pope Gregory IX ordered a crackdown on clerical fornication in the German church in November 1231, he included those engaged in homosexual activity among those who were to be compelled to become continent (Little 1978, p. 142).

Despite the reformers' denunciations of homosexuality, their responses to it were often restrained. For clear political and organizational reasons, they gave much higher priority to ending lay investiture, simony, and clerical marriage than to the suppression of homosexuality. Thus, accusa-

³² The association between Catholic clergy and homosexuality persisted long after the period under discussion. Perry (1980, pp. 67–84, 122, 132) finds that in Seville around 1600 the practice of homosexual sodomy was popularly believed to be endemic in the priesthood, and clergy were represented disproportionately among those prosecuted for this offense. The government feared that cynicism about the immorality of the clergy would give greater appeal to heresy.

tions of homosexuality against church officials were sometimes ignored. Anselm urged in correspondence that "sodomites" not be admitted to the priesthood and wanted those already admitted warned against sin, but favored moderation in punishment (Goodich 1979, pp. 41–42). In many instances, clerics who were aware of their own homosexual impulses may have been reluctant to endorse or participate in the persecution of others (Boswell 1980, pp. 211–21); Peter Damian complained that those guilty of homosexual relations with priests could avoid serious penalty by confessing to their partners (Bullough 1976, p. 363).

Nevertheless, as time went on, the church became more uncompromising in its stance on homosexuality. This development followed almost inevitably from the success of the reform movement. The more the church suppressed priestly marriage and concubinage and strengthened monastic discipline, the stronger was the homosexual drive it must have aroused within its ranks. The organizational suppression of sexuality would have prevented many priests from giving expression to their homosexual impulses. The repression of sexual impulses that could be neither expressed nor acknowledged would have given rise to sharp psychological conflict. Fear and hostility toward homosexuality would have developed and increased in intensity throughout the Middle Ages as a psychological defense mechanism against this inner conflict.³³ The irrational and at times hysterical tones in which homosexuality is mentioned in the late Middle Ages can thus be understood as manifestations of reaction formation and projection originating in organizationally induced psychic conflict.³⁴

Gender and Class Conflict in the Middle Ages

Although the church devoted its greatest efforts to the control of homosexuality among the clergy, it was also concerned with the morals of the laity. Some of this concern might be expected from the indiscriminate na-

³³ Contemporary psychological research has established that heterosexuals are less accepting of same-sex homosexuals than of opposite-sex homosexuals, suggesting that these defense mechanisms against homosexual impulses continue to influence attitudes toward homosexuality (San Miguel and Millham 1976; Weinberger and Millham 1979). The connection between paranoia and anxiety connected with repressed homosexual impulses has been established in several studies (for a summary, see Kline 1972, pp. 265–75). Given the trend toward greater repression of homosexuality, it is a bit surprising to find as late as the end of the 15th century some reformers who still treated priests who took concubines and those guilty of homosexual offenses on an equal footing; yet they existed. Thus Savonarola complains in a letter that "this one goes at night to his concubine, the other to his youthful male lover, and then in the morning they go to say mass" (Lea 1884, p. 399). (The translation from the Italian is by David Greenberg.)

³⁴ The repression of priestly heterosexuality created conflicts that if anything were even more intense. This kind of conflict, reflected at first in Mariolatry, which flourished in the 12th century, and later in the witchcraft persecutions, contributed to the increasing misogyny of the later Middle Ages.

ture of psychological defense mechanisms; but the content of literature discussing homosexuality suggests that issues of life-style and gender stereotyping were as much at issue as sexual expression per se. For example, in late 11th- and 12th-century Normandy and England, the clergy complained about the prevalence of homosexuality in the royal entourage of the Norman rulers. The young men of the court had begun to wear long hair and women's clothing and adopted effeminate mannerisms. Thus the monk Orderic deplored the court of William Rufus, son of William the Conqueror, where "the effeminate predominated everywhere and revelled without restraint, while filthy catamites, fit only to perish in the flames, abandoned themselves to the foulest practices of Sodom" (Hyde 1970, p. 33). Similar passages appear in the writings of Orderic's contemporaries, including William of Malmsbury. In 1108 the Council of Westminster condemned men's wearing their hair long, and several leading churchmen not only preached against the effeminacy of the court but actually cut the hair of king and nobles with their own scissors (Tatlock 1950, pp. 351–53; Freeman 1882, 1:159; 2:330, 340–41).

These passages deplore homosexuality only incidentally; their deepest preoccupation is with men dressing and acting like women. In the upper levels of feudal society, sexual stratification had been extremely sharp. The new styles of clothing and bodily appearance cultivated by the post-Conquest Norman aristocracy were incompatible with the traditional pastimes of their class (hunting and military combat) and involved the imitation of members of a disvalued social status, women. It was this that the conservative clergy found repugnant.

Opposition to the luxurious and expensive standard of living of the court also appears prominently in writings about homosexuality among the laity. The following passage, written by the English cleric John of Salisbury in 1159, illustrates this theme:

When the rich lascivious wanton is preparing to satisfy his passion he has his hair elaborately frizzled and curled; he puts to shame a courtesan's make-up, an actor's costume. . . . Thus arrayed he takes the feet of the figure reclining by him in his hands, and in plain view of others caresses them and, not to be too explicit, the legs as well. The hand that had been encased in a glove to protect it from the sun and keep it soft for the voluptuary's purpose extends its exploration. Growing bolder, he allows his hand to pass over the entire body with lecherous caress, incites the lascivious thrill that he has aroused, and fans the flame of languishing desire. Such abominations should be spat upon rather than held up to view. . . . [Quoted in Karlen 1971, p. 87]

As this passage indicates, complaints about homosexuality began to be used to express popular discontent over a growing social gap between the court and the rest of the population. John was probably of modest social

origins and was alarmed at the erosion of traditional morality by the new wealth (Cantor 1969, p. 356).

Sodomy also was linked with wealth in the class conflicts that accompanied economic growth in the cities of northern Italy, northern France, Flanders, and the Rhine Valley beginning in the middle of the 12th century. In the first phase of the conflict, merchant capitalists (*popoli grassi*) supported by artisans, small tradesmen, and laborers (*popoli minuti*) contended with the aristocracy for political supremacy in city government. For the merchants, the cultural dimension of this conflict entailed a rejection of values and life-styles antithetical to their own. Whereas the bourgeoisie saw itself as industrious and self-reliant, it saw the aristocracy as lazy and parasitical (Cantor 1969, p. 412–14).

The bourgeoisie also reacted against sodomy (by which they meant all nonprocreative sexual activity) among the aristocrats, seeing it as an unproductive self-indulgence that expressed lust, not love or the desire for children. Indeed, sodomy became a metonym for excessive indulgence of material desires, evoking connotations that went far beyond sexuality. It represented a going beyond natural limits in the sexual sphere, in the same way that unrestricted greed did in the economic sphere.

Since the highest levels of the Italian aristocracy were involved in money lending (Moore 1977, p. 55), sodomy and usury quickly became linked in the popular mentality.³⁵ The historical association between the feudal aristocracy and homosexual sodomy makes this linkage unsurprising; what is probably more significant is the symbolization of usury in terms of the antispiritual amassing of wealth and the employment of it in ways that upset older forms of sociality and undermined traditional morality. In northern Europe, to attribute sodomy to the great Italian bankers who lent to the royal houses of England and Europe at high interest rates (Goodich 1979, p. 86; Koffler 1981) was to depict lenders who were “screwing” their debtors financially as doing so literally through sexual domination and exploitation of weakness.³⁶

By the mid-13th century, the bankers, merchants, and manufacturers who had ousted the old feudal nobility in the commercial centers came

³⁵ Dante, e.g., placed usurers and sodomists together in the same circle of Hell (Koffler 1979). Like others of his era, he used the term “sodomy” very loosely. For example, he characterized blasphemy and the refusal to write poetry in the vernacular as “spiritual sodomy”—the latter because the refusal to communicate violates the natural order (Pézard 1950, pp. 294–311).

³⁶ The widespread equation of sodomy and usury in the literature of this period suggests a possible revision of Mary Douglas’s scheme, described above. When an economy becomes commercialized, it may be that it is not the experience of society as a whole that corresponds to the experience of sexuality but rather the experience of economic relations in particular. The importance of economic metaphors in Victorian literature on male sexuality (Barker-Benfield 1976) is consistent with this observation and suggests that it may be worth further exploration.

under political pressure from artisans and tradesmen who sought broader participation in city government. Heightened inequality of wealth exacerbated popular resentment of the profligate life-styles and vulgar ostentation of the *nouveau riche* capitalists. The *popoli minuti* raged against the economic practices of the great bankers and merchants (usury), and at the social and sexual habits they associated with these *popoli grassi*: gambling, adultery, prostitution, and sodomy (heterosexual and homosexual). The moral rigidity and fanaticism produced by the perilous class position of the popular strata can be seen in the fervor of their later campaign against opulence in the time of Savonarola (1490s), during which Florence enacted a new statute against homosexuality (Thompson 1959, 1:462–69; Mollat and Wolff 1973, pp. 288–89; Moore 1977, p. 55; Goodich 1976; 1979, pp. 9, 79–88).

Bourgeois hostility toward the medieval aristocracy was exceeded only by its antagonism toward the organized church. Clergy who lived in affluence on the contributions of the laity and whose personal morality was inconsistent with the claims of the church to a privileged status in spiritual matters were detested by an intensely pious bourgeoisie (as well as by the rural and urban poor). Donatism, the heresy that declares the invalidity of sacraments administered by immoral clergy, flourished in this atmosphere. Bourgeois demands to be free from compulsory church tithes added a material dimension to this cultural conflict (Herlihy 1958, p. 59; Moore 1977, p. 65). It was these nascent middle classes that demanded and supported the Gregorian reforms. Thus, the *popolo* attempted to overthrow the established church hierarchy in Milan, in alliance with the papacy. Non-celibate clergy were forced to flee the city when mobs beat them and plundered their homes (Brooke 1975, p. 343; Butler 1969, pp. 66–67; Schimmelpfennig 1979).

The Gregorian reformers considered the reconstitution of the spiritual life and organizational structure of the Church so important that to advance this goal, they were willing to countenance violent attacks on obdurate clergy. Geopolitical concerns reinforced this willingness. The Hohenstaufen ambition of subjugating all of Italy ran directly contrary to papal political interests, for, with Rome surrounded by the Holy Roman Empire, it could not have maintained its political independence. To prevent this, Rome supported the popular anti-imperial parties in the northern Italian cities. It was these parties that furnished the troops that, under the political leadership of Pope Alexander III, defeated the imperial armies at Legano in 1174 (Cantor 1969, pp. 430–31; Herlihy 1958, p. 55). Thus church-state conflict became implicated in urban class politics. The persecution of sodomists—directed largely though not exclusively against homosexual sodomy—was an indirect production of this confluence. The lay fraternities

created by the reforming friars (whose members, according to Freed [1977] were largely nonnoble) gave special attention to the persecution of sodomy.

By the end of the 13th century, the major elements in the Christian response toward homosexuality had been created. Scholastic theology had reconstructed sodomy as a sin against nature, far worse than other sexual sins. The mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans) had been created with a special mandate to suppress heresy and sodomy. The Inquisition, staffed by these orders, had been established. Where it was given a free hand, as in Spain, it played an active role in the prosecution of persons suspected of homosexual activity (Perry 1980, p. 132). The governments of the revived commercial cities and the centralizing monarchies joined in this prosecution by executing offenders convicted in ecclesiastical courts and by trying, convicting, and executing offenders under their own secular authorities. Only in the modern era were these ideas and practices modified or abandoned.

DISCUSSION

Our analysis suggests that intolerance toward homosexuality and other forms of sexual activity grew in late antiquity because of the strains of profound social change. After a period of comparative acceptance, repression began again in the 13th century as an unanticipated consequence of organizational reforms in the church and of class conflict associated with the commercialization of medieval society.

Apart from clarifying the history of social responses to one particular form of sexual expression, our account has broader implications for deviance theory. The processes by which a given form of behavior comes to be stigmatized and subjected to repressive social control have been analyzed heretofore largely in terms of entrepreneurial social movements or of organizations seeking material or symbolic gain. Although such entrepreneurs appear in our account (e.g., the Gregorian reformers), our approach moves beyond this familiar level of analysis in a number of crucial respects. First, we examine the social-structural developments which give rise to these social movements and shape their goals. In doing so we do not neglect the ideological factors that influenced the character and direction of these social movements. An analysis that simply describes social movements and their goals and perspectives would shed light on these social-structural roots only to the extent that movement participants were themselves aware of these roots. We know of no reason to think that people are always aware of the experiences and constraints that limit and direct their thoughts and actions. The exploration of these hidden factors and their effects is a major task for sociologists, not only in the study of human sexuality, but more generally in sociology.

Moreover, in analyzing the role of social-structural developments, we do not restrict our gaze to economic factors. Although such economic developments as the growth of commerce, urbanization, and increased social stratification in the ancient world and the revival of a cash economy in the Middle Ages are important to our analysis, we also consider such morphological variables as the organizational structure of the church. An analysis that failed to consider the complex conjuncture of these variables would miss much that was important. In short, we caution against economic reductionism. Yet in stressing that the social creation of deviance-defining categories must be analyzed in relation to an institutional and ideological context, we are by no means advocating a functionalist explanation. We make no assumption that society has moral boundaries that are maintained by forbidding homosexual activity, that society as a whole gains by the prohibition, or that the patterns we have described are explained by their consequences.

It is an explicit feature of our work that we allow for the possibility of unanticipated consequences. The Hildebrandian reformers who campaigned for clerical celibacy do not appear to have expected that their success would later contribute to the execution of sodomists or witches, but our analysis suggests that the institutional reforms they carried out helped to bring about these results.

Second, we see the course of social change as being influenced not only by the direct intervention of participants in the social movements but also by members of the larger society from which movements recruit members and derive their ideas and whose acquiescence may be necessary if a movement is to succeed. The asceticism of the early church and the medieval reform movement were in part responses to popular demand, not solely impositions from the top.

Third, we have not considered homosexuality alone. The early Christian church was antagonistic, not just to homosexuality, but to wide varieties of sexual expression. It was this larger pattern that we attempted to delineate in our discussion of asceticism. Deviance theorists to date have largely neglected the relationship among responses to different kinds of deviant behavior;³⁷ our analysis suggests that the investigation of common patterns of responses may be a fruitful direction for further work.

Finally, we note that psychological processes occupy a place in our analysis. Institutional change can influence the socialization process and structure the opportunities and costs of satisfying psychological needs or drives. Although psychiatric writings on the etiology and treatment of homosexuality have been criticized widely for their antihomosexual bias, psychoanalytic theory may still contribute to an understanding of responses to homosexuality or other forms of deviance. For the most part, sociological

³⁷ One of the rare exceptions is Rothman (1971).

work in this area has relied implicitly on a "goal-directed rational actor" model of cognition and action. Useful though this model may be as a starting point, it is also psychologically shallow. Our work points to the possible transcendence of this limitation.

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American Journal of Sociology

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Author(s): Sophia Menache

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THE TEMPLAR ORDER: A FAILED IDEAL?

BY

SOPHIA MENACHE*

The arrest of the Knights Templars in the Kingdom of France (October 13, 1307) and the suppression of the Order in the Council of Vienne (May 4, 1312) have elicited both popular and scholarly attention.¹ Yet, this broad interest in the Templars has not led to a satisfactory explanation of Philip the Fair's unprecedented move in arresting the knights and Clement V's decision to abolish the Order. There are varied and conflicting interpretations for these events. For example, Joshua Prawer described the Templars as victims of the prevailing enmity towards all Military Orders. Having failed to find a substitute for the Holy Land, as the Hospitallers and Teutonic knights succeeded in doing, the Templars were more vulnerable to attack from the King of France.² Joseph Strayer offered two distinct but complementary reasons for this: Philip both coveted their money and fully believed the charges of heresy leveled against them.³ While noting the "many criticisms and somber suspicions which stained the reputation of the Templar Order," Anne Gilmour-Bryson viewed the arrest as a political act—Philip's affirmation of the temporal over the spiritual.⁴ Malcolm Barber

*Miss Menache is a professor of history and head of the Department of History in the University of Haifa.

¹In the 1880's Langlois attested to some sixty books written on the subject; by 1928 the number had grown to 1,300; see Charles Langlois, "Livres sur l'histoire des Templiers," *Revue historique*, 40 (1889), 169; M. Dessubre, *Bibliographie de l'ordre des Templiers* (Paris, 1928); see also J. O. Ward, "The Fall of the Templars," *Journal of Religious History*, 13 (1984), 92–113.

²Joshua Prawer, "Military Orders and Crusader Politics in the Second Half of the XIIIth Century," in *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, eds. Josef Fleckenstein und Manfred Hellmann (Sigmaringen, 1980), pp. 227–228.

³Joseph R. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 287–288.

⁴Anne Gilmour-Bryson, *The Trial of the Templars in the Papal State and the Abruzzi* (Vatican City, 1982), pp. 12–13.

pointed to the decline of the crusading spirit as a major factor in undermining the Order's functional role and making it more vulnerable to criticism and attack. He further emphasized Philip's need for specie, the weakening of the Papacy, and the development of the Inquisition under royal control as contributing factors in the suppression of the Order.⁵ Jean Favier saw in the dissolution of the Order a consequence of Boniface's trial which reflected the decline of papal theocracy, and an instance of the indifference of fourteenth-century Christendom toward the Levant.⁶

This study will re-examine the suppression of the Templar Order from three complementary angles which have not yet received satisfactory attention:

(1) The validity of the Templars' ideology in the eyes of their contemporaries, namely, the expectations of the knights, and the degree to which they actually succeeded in fulfilling those expectations.

(2) Any correlation there may be between prevailing attitudes toward the Temple before 1307 and the charges which led to their arrest and the eventual suppression of the Order.

(3) The arrest of the Templars against the background of Philip the Fair's political and socio-economic policies.

* * *

In his paper "The Social Context of the Templars" Malcolm Barber calls attention to the fact that "the empathy between the Templars and the interests of lay aristocratic society which can be seen in the twelfth century had its dangers, for when it began to be believed that the Templars fell short of the ideal, the reaction could be as hostile as the initial reception had been enthusiastic."⁷ This view assumes the nobility's support to have been essential to the status of the Temple. Thus, its suppression would appear to be a result of changing attitudes, and especially hostility (or, perhaps, disappointment?) on the part of the nobility toward the knights. When the Order was founded, support for it amongst the medieval nobility was indeed considerable.⁸ This was obvious from their contributions, both in land and

⁵Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 43.

⁶Jean Favier, "Les Templiers ou l'échec des banquiers de la croisade," *L'Histoire*, 47 (1982), 50-51.

⁷Malcolm Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 34 (1984), 46, 31, 37, 39.

⁸Although before the late 1120's there is little mention of patronage of the Templars in the West, this could be attributed to a lack of public awareness rather than to disapproval of the Order. After the mission of Hugh of Payns (c. 1127) and the Council of Troyes, the Temple began to receive large contributions.

money, and the willingness of many nobles to expand the ranks of the Templars in the Holy Land.⁹ In contrast, as early as 1160, Pope Alexander III had to issue a bull restraining people from pulling Templars off their horses, treating them dishonestly or abusing them.¹⁰ The papal document suggests that, from the earliest stages, support for the Templars was neither universal nor definitive. The question remains, then: to what extent did the Templars justify the expectations of their contemporaries? One can further ask to what degree the knights identified themselves with St. Bernard's *De laude novae militiae* which, from the 1130's, became their "calling card" in Christendom.

The relationship between Templar ideology and practice on the one hand, and the expectations of their contemporaries on the other, can be clarified by quoting from well-known passages of the abbot of Clairvaux:

They are seen [to be] both more gentle than lambs, and more ferocious than lions, that I almost doubt what I should prefer them to be called, namely monks or knights, unless I should call them in fact most suitably by both [names], in whom neither is known to be lacking, neither the gentleness of the monk nor the strength of the knight. . . . Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. How glorious are the victors who return from battle! How blessed are the martyrs who die in battle! Rejoice, courageous athlete, if you live and conquer in the Lord, but exult and glory the more if you die and are joined to the Lord. . . . For if those are blessed who die in the Lord, how much more blessed are those who die for the Lord?¹¹

Bernard's eulogy was no exception. Pope Innocent II, too, was not sparing in his praise of the excellence and faithfulness of the Templars; in his bull *Omne datum optimum* (March 29, 1139) the Pope addressed them as "beloved sons in the Lord . . . true Israelites and warriors most versed in holy battle . . . defenders of the Church and assailants of the enemies of Christ."¹²

Literary and epic sources also reveal broad support for the Templars. The

⁹See an anonymous letter of encouragement and support, dated from the late 1120's in J. Leclercq, "Un document sur les débuts des Templiers," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 52 (1957), 89. On the hope of donors to be recompensed with paradise, see *Cartulaire générale de l'Ordre du Temple, 1119-1150*, ed. Marquis d'Albon (Paris, 1913), nos. 46, 82, 84, 85, 98, etc.

¹⁰*Malteser Urkunden und Regesten zur Geschichte der Tempelherren und der Johanniter*, ed. Hans Prutz (Munich, 1883), no. 4, p. 38. Prutz cited twenty-one renewals of this bull.

¹¹Bernard of Clairvaux, "*Liber ad milites Templi de laude novae militiae*," in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq et al. (Rome, 1963), III, 214-216. P. Cousin, "Les débuts de l'ordre des Templiers et Saint Bernard," in *Mélanges Saint Bernard*, ed. Thomas Merton et al. (Paris, 1953), pp. 41-52.

¹²D'Albon, *Cartulaire général*, no. 5, pp. 375-379.

Order as a whole served as an historical foundation upon which the Grail knighthood of the Cistercian *Queste* developed.¹³ The Templar ideal permeated Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, whose *Grallitterschaft* is composed of *Templeisen*.¹⁴ In his *Nouvelle complainte d'outre-mer* (1276) Rutebeuf stressed the fidelity of the knights to God¹⁵; Guiot de Provins, a minstrel of northern France, corroborated the fact that "*moult sont prud-hommes les Templiers*."¹⁶ In the *Speculum Stultorum*, when Brunellus recounted the various religious orders, the Templars were the first to come to mind.¹⁷ In a letter to the master of the Templars, Peter of Cluny professed his perpetual love for the Order and lauded it for its incessant and assiduous fight against the Saracens.¹⁸ Besides the use of Templar ideals for literary purposes and edification,¹⁹ positive images of the knights also permeated Moslem sources. The chronicler I'bn Alatsyr referred to the high regard Saladin and all Moslems had for the word of a Templar, although they distrusted that of other Christians. Another Arab chronicler noted with something akin to awe the fact that, of six hundred Templars captured by Bendocdar and offered their lives if they converted to Islam, only one apostatized. The rest went willingly to their deaths.²⁰ Christian preachers likewise corroborated the courage of the Templars. Etienne de Bourbon spoke at length of the hard life of the knights in the Holy Land who, on occasion, were unable to mount their horses because of the painful severities they inflicted on their body.²¹ As to Jacques de Vitry, he defended the

¹³Pauline M. Matarasso (trans.), *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (Baltimore, 1969), p. 20; Jean Frappier, "Le Graal et la chevalerie," *Romania*, 75 (1964), 179.

¹⁴Helen Adolf, *Visio Pacis: Holy City and Grail* (Philadelphia, 1960), p. 72.

¹⁵*Onze poèmes de Rutebeuf concernant la croisade*, eds. Julia Bastin and Edmond Faral (Paris, 1946), p. 129.

¹⁶"The Templars are very honorable men," see Le Roux de Lincy, *Le livre des proverbes français* (2 vols., 1859; reprint, Geneva, 1968), I, 54–55; see also Alain Demurger, *Vie et mort de l'ordre du Temple: 1118–1314* (Paris, 1989), p. 281.

¹⁷Nigel de Longchamp, *Speculum Stultorum*, eds. John H. Mozley and Robert R. Raymo (Berkeley, California, 1960), pp. 26–27.

¹⁸*The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. Giles Constable, Vol. I (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 407–408.

¹⁹Gregory J. Wilkin, "The Dissolution of the Templar Ideal in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *English Studies*, 63 (1982), 109–121.

²⁰Edward J. Martin, *The Trial of the Templars* (London, 1928), p. 16. This courageous image of the Templars had its dangers; following their arrest, some French chroniclers neutralized the effects of torture on their confessions as "the Templars are warriors who do not succumb easily to fear"; see *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ed. M. Moranville (Paris, 1891), p. 209; Jean de Paris, "Excerpta e memoriali historiarum," in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* (hereafter *R.H.G.F.*), XXI, 658.

²¹*Anecdotes historiques d'Etienne de Bourbon*, ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris, 1877), tit. V,

Templars against heretic accusations that they contravened the precepts of Christ by taking up the sword.²² True, the testimony of Bernard de Clairvaux and Pope Innocent II may be disregarded because of its propagandistic nature, both being well known patrons of the Order; but they are not the only sources equating the Templars and twelfth-century ideals of chivalry.²³ This identification bestowed the knights with material support from the aristocracy and ideological countenance from the minstrels and epic poets of Christendom. And it earned them the admiration of Moslem leaders, Christian preachers, and chroniclers *Outremer*.

Yet, efforts of Alexander III and subsequent popes to repress attacks against the Templars are testimony to the varying degrees of hostility encountered by the knights. The criticisms of ecclesiastical writers such as William of Tyre hint at the conflicting opinions.²⁴ Although he was considered to be biased against the Order, William provides an appropriate starting point.²⁵ In reporting the Order's establishment, he praised its ideology and the piety of the first knights. Very soon, however, he accused them of aspiring to rival the wealth of monarchs:

They are said to have vast possessions, both on this side of the sea and beyond. There is not a province in the Christian world today that does not bestow some part of its possessions upon these brethren, and their property is reported to be equal to the riches of kings. . . . For a long time they kept intact their noble purpose and carried out their profession wisely enough. At length, however, they began to neglect humility, the guardian of all virtues. . . . They withdrew from the patriarch of Jerusalem, from whom they had received the establishment of their Order and their first privileges, and refused him the obedience which their predecessors had shown him. To the churches of God also they became very troublesome, for they drew away from them their tithes and first fruits and unjustly disturbed their possessions.²⁶

The Templars' exemption from clerical patronage and release from the

p. 188; see also *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas F. Crane (1890; reprint, New York, 1971), sermons 86, 87, 90.

²²Jacques de Vitry, "Alius sermo ad fratres milicie," *B.N. Lat.* 17509, fol. 74v.

²³C. Morris, "Equestris Ordo: Chivalry as a Vocation in the Twelfth Century," *Studies in Church History*, ed. D. Barker, 15 (1978), 87–96.

²⁴From the very beginning the Templars' legitimization of bloodshed raised criticism; see A. J. Forey, "The Emergence of the Military Order in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (April, 1985), 191–194.

²⁵Friedrich Lundgreen, *Wilhelm von Tyrus und der Templerorden* (Berlin, 1911), ad a. 1179, *passim*.

²⁶*Willelmi Tyronensis Archiepiscopi*, 12. 7, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum*, LXIII (2 vols.; Turnhout, 1986), pp. 553–555.

tithe²⁷ did indeed soon become a source of resentment in their dealings with the secular hierarchy. The Temple's wealth or, more accurately, the fantastic economic power attributed to it, only aggravated this state of affairs. John of Würzburg, a German priest who traveled to the Holy Land sometime around 1200, refers to the

much property and countless revenues [of the Temple] both in that country and elsewhere. It gives a considerable amount of alms to the poor in Christ, but not a tenth part of that which is done by the Hospitallers. The house also has very many knights for the defence of the land of the Christians; but they have the misfortune, I know not whether truly or falsely, to have their fair fame aspersed with the reproach of treachery, which indeed was clearly proved in the well known affair of Damascus under King Conrad.²⁸

John alludes here to the siege of Damascus of July, 1148. The Templars were reported to have been bribed by the Moslems to persuade Conrad III, King of the Romans, to raise the siege. The *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le trésorier* repeats this charge, but accuses the Hospitallers of connivance as well.²⁹ William of Tyre criticized the "cupidity . . . of certain of our nobles," although he did not explicitly refer to the Templars.³⁰ However, the Templars' alleged betrayal of the Crusade and the Holy Land received full attention in his writings. Reporting the capture of Ascalon (1153), William strongly disapproved of the Templars' offensive as motivated by lust for spoils and plunder.³¹ In 1154 he went so far as to accuse the knights of delivering Nasr-al-Din, the son of the late Egyptian sultan, to his enemies in exchange for sixty thousand gold florins, even though he was on the verge of converting to Christianity.³² And in reporting the death of the master, Eudes de Saint-Amand (1179), William described him as "a wicked man, haughty and arrogant, in whose nostrils dwelt the spirit of

²⁷See note 11. However, the tithe exemption in *Omne datum optimum* was not complete, nor was the independence from the Patriarch of Jerusalem; see J. Riley Smith, "The Templars and the Castle of Tortosa in Syria: An Unknown Document Concerning the Acquisition of the Fortress," *English Historical Review*, 84 (April, 1969), 278–288.

²⁸"Description of the Holy Land by John of Würzburg," *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, ed. Titus Tobler, Vol. V (New York, 1974), p. 21.

²⁹*Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le trésorier*, ed. M. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), pp. 12–13; on the chronicle and its authorship see M. R. Morgan, *The Chronicle of Ernoul and the Continuations of William of Tyre* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 42–50.

³⁰*Willelmi Tyronensis*, 17. 5, p. 766.

³¹*Ibid.*, 17. 27, pp. 798–799.

³²*Ibid.*, 18. 9, p. 823. This story soon came to be known in Europe; Walter Map used it in his attack on the Templars, and Guido of Bazoches repeated it as well, evidently summarizing William's account. See Walter Map, *De Nugis curialium*, I, 21–22, ed. M. R. James (Oxford, 1914), pp. 31–33; Guido de Bazoches, *Apologia contra maledicos*, B.N. Lat. 4998, fol. 63 rb, 63 va.

fury, one who neither feared God nor revered man." No wonder, therefore, that ultimately he was "mourned by no one."³³

William went even further and presented the entire Order as a threat to the existence of the Crusader kingdom. In 1165–1166 he criticized the Templars' surrender of a fortress to Shirkuh and justified the angry response of King Amaury, who put twelve Templars to death.³⁴ Worse still, in 1173 he accused the Templars of *lese maiestatis crimen* for having murdered the Assassins' envoy, Abdallah. This misdeed threatened to bring "irreparable ruin" upon the kingdom. William's reflections on this point merit some consideration:

The news of this atrocious deed roused the king to violent anger. Almost frenzied, he summoned the barons and, declaring that the outrage amounted to injury against himself, he demanded their advice as the course of action to be adopted. The barons were of one mind that such wickedness should not be passed over. For by that crime the royal authority seemed to be put to naught and undeserved infamy brought upon the good faith and constancy of the Christian profession. Moreover, through this act the church in the Orient seemed likely to lose the increase so pleasing to God that had been already prepared for it.³⁵

Even if we heed Friedrich Lundgreen's reservations apropos of William's reliability regarding the Templars, William's testimony at least proves that criticism of the Order existed as early as the twelfth century—that is, before the knights entered into banking and finance on a large scale.³⁶ Moreover, this criticism questioned the Templars' devotion and good faith vis-à-vis the Holy Land and the Crusades—both ideological foundations of the Order. The increasing involvement of the Templars in financial transactions inflamed the criticism of their greed and avarice, traits which had done substantial harm to their image from early on. John of Salisbury accused the Templars of avarice; so did Walter Map.³⁷ Similarly, Jacques de Vitry com-

³³ *Willelmi Tyronensis*, 21. 28 (29), p. 1002.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19. 11, p. 879. Lundgreen, who places the event in 1166, questioned William's statement although he was unable to refute it (*op. cit.*, p. 101).

³⁵ *Willelmi Tyronensis*, 20. 29–30, pp. 953–955.

³⁶ It may be noted, however, that the Templars had helped bail out Louis VII on the Second Crusade and they were a vital element in the financial survival of Alexander III during the schism, when he was often cut off from other sources of papal finance. See Malcolm Barber, *The Trial*, p. 9.

³⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 7. 21, ed. Clement Webb (2 vols.; Oxford, 1909; reprint, Frankfurt, 1965), II, 190–201; see also Walter Map, *De nugis curialium* 19, 20, 23, pp. 29–31, 34–35. On Walter Map's increasing criticism of the Templars and its causes, see F. Seibt, *Die Schrift De Nugis curialium: Studien zum Weltbild und zur geistigen Persönlichkeit Walter Maps* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Munich, 1952), pp. 36–37.

plained, "You profess to have no individual property, but in common you wish to have everything." He cautioned the knights in their use of the wealth they had received for defending the Church.³⁸ Matthew Paris, a consistent critic of the Order, blamed the knights for actually prolonging the wars with the Saracens, as a pretext for raising more money. He repeated Emperor Frederick's claim that the Templars entertained the Sultans and allowed them to worship in the houses of the Temple.³⁹ In 1229 he charged them with treason for betraying Frederick II⁴⁰ and, twenty-one years later, in 1250, St. Louis.⁴¹

Such testimony confirms the existence of a widespread resentment against the Templars among ecclesiastics, a resentment that was fed by the knights' privileges which in effect did encroach on the authority and resources of the clergy.⁴² A vein of criticism was also present in apostolic correspondence, even though the papacy had initiated and sponsored all the Military Orders.⁴³ Pope Innocent III, otherwise a friend of the Templars, claimed that "they make a cloak of religion for worldly gain." He writes in the severest fashion about the Order's misuse of its copious privileges:

Following the doctrine of devils, they mark the sign of the Crucified on every kind of vagabond . . . they think nothing of adding sin to sin like a long rope, claiming that whosoever have appealed to their brotherhood by a yearly contribution of two or three shillings cannot be lawfully deprived of the burial office of the Church even though they may be under interdict.⁴⁴

³⁸Jacques de Vitry, "*Sermo 37 ad fratres ordinis militaris*," *Sermones vulgares*, in *Analecta novissima: Spicilegii Solesmensis altera continuatio*, ed. Jean B. Pitra (2 vols.; Paris, 1888), II, 409–411; see also the *Livre de Howth*, H. Wood, "The Templars in Ireland," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 27 (1907), 344. According to Jean Favier, during the thirteenth century the Templars became in the eyes of many "*un simple organisme bancaire*" (*op. cit.*, p. 44).

³⁹Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. H. Luard, *Rolls Series* (London, 1874), II, 145; III, 177–179; however, in his *Abbreviatio chronicorum* he withdrew this accusation, see *idem*, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. F. Madden, *Rolls Series* (London, 1866), II, 312–314; III, 259.

⁴⁰Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, II, 525; III, 177–179.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, V, 134.

⁴²A. J. Forey, "The Military Orders in the Crusading Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and Early-Fourteenth Centuries," *Traditio*, 36 (1980), 317; see also the conciliar declarations against all Military Orders, Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Cartulaire général de l'ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint Jean de Jérusalem* (4 vols.; Paris, 1894–1906), nos. 3887, 4029, etc.; on the rivalry between the secular clergy and all exempt monastical orders, see David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England* (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1948–1959), I, 186.

⁴³Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), pp. 377 ff.

⁴⁴September 13, 1207, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 215, cols. 1217–1218.

In his bull *De insolentia Templariorum reprimenda* (1223) Pope Honorius III claimed that the English Templars abused their privileges. He accused the knights of usurping domains, preventing customary dues from being paid to the crown, disregarding the customs of the king's manors, and engaging royal officers in vexatious lawsuits.⁴⁵ At this stage the negative image of the knights was also promoted in the popular mind. There were, for instance, the French proverbs, "To drink like a Templar"⁴⁶ and "To swear like a Templar,"⁴⁷ as well as the German term *Tempelhaus* for "brothel." At Famagusta, it was said that the Templars claimed that no girl was a woman until she had slept with a Templar.⁴⁸ In two later thirteenth-century romances the Templars were depicted as sympathetic toward lovers.⁴⁹ These provide fair indications of the growing disparity between the original expectations of the Templars and their image in thirteenth-century daily life.

As time progressed, and the failures in the Holy Land multiplied, the suspicion grew that the Templars were not doing their utmost to defend the Christian fortresses *Outremer*. According to *Le Roman de Renart*,

*Et tant vous dis que si les Templiers
Nous avaient aidés, sans être jaloux de nous,
Nous aurions toute la Syrie, Jerusalem et toute l'Egypte.*⁵⁰

Though critical to the Templars' motivation, this popular source suggests a high regard for the military abilities of the knights. However, it is not clear whether these critics possessed precise information about the Order's

⁴⁵*Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, ed. Augustus Potthast (2 vols.; Graz, 1957), Vol. I, nos. 6864, 6814. *Foedera, Conventiones, Literae . . . inter Reges Angliae ab ineunte saeculo duodecimo ad nostra usque tempora*, ed. Thomas Rymer, 3rd ed. (40 vols. in 10, 1739–1745; reprint, Hants, 1967), I. i. 80.

⁴⁶Bordonove, however, denies any accuracy of this claim; see Georges Bordonove, *La vie quotidienne des Templiers au XIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1975), p. 235.

⁴⁷M. L. Bult-Thiele, *Sacrae Domus Militiae Templi Hierosolymitani Magistri: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Templerordens 1118/19–1314* (Göttingen, 1974), p. 350. In a love song by Gontier de Soignies, written in the early thirteenth century, the Order was presented as a fitting place of retreat for a man who had been crossed in love. See *Gontiers de Soignies: il canzoniere*, ed. L. Fornisano (Milan and Naples, 1980), lines 63–64.

⁴⁸*Li Romans de Claris et Laris*, ed. J. Alton (Tübingen, 1884), lines 9863–9871; *Sone von Nausay*, ed. M. Goldschmidt (Tübingen, 1899), lines 4637–6840.

⁴⁹Le Roux de Lincy, *Le livre des proverbes français*, I, 54–55.

⁵⁰"And so you say that if the Templars/ Would have helped us without being jealous of us/ We would have all Syria, Jerusalem and all Egypt." See *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. Mario Roques (6 vols.; Paris, 1960), V, 45. A similar criticism was voiced by Rostanh Bérenguer; see P. Meyer, "Les derniers troubadours de la Provence," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 30 (1869), 497–498.

resources and its actual contribution to the defense of the Holy Land.⁵¹ But although the papal curia was well informed of the actual situation in the Latin East, its superior knowledge of the circumstances did not result in an improved image of the Templars. In 1278 Pope Nicholas III wrote to the three leading Orders, commanding them to maintain the required complement of soldiers in the East. The pope also threatened spiritual and temporal penalties if they failed to comply.⁵²

At this point one may conclude that, prior to 1307, support for the Templars was neither universal nor conclusive. In addition to the partisan antagonism of ecclesiastical writers, one can also point to growing criticism on the part of the Papal Curia and the enmity of popular social strata, reflected in both the theoretical (satiric proverbs) and the practical levels (physical attacks). Furthermore, prior to 1307, the Templars were perceived to embody vices such as greed, avarice, and treachery, which were taken as their hallmark. These traits, which were to be condemned in every Christian, were even more reprehensible among those who had taken the monastic vow. Instead of the most sublime Christian ideals with which they were identified at their beginnings, by the early fourteenth century the knights had gradually become a living contradiction to Crusader ideology and, as such, jeopardized the stability of Christendom. From a methodological perspective, this state of affairs justifies a shift of focus in research to before the Templars' arrest in 1307. In other words, instead of focusing on the suppression of the Order as an isolated, extraordinary fact, it will be more meaningful to ask how the Templars lasted through the thirteenth century in the face of the wide criticism and hostility they encountered in Europe and the Latin East. Paradoxically, in the conflict between vice and financial power, one may argue that their financial role in Christendom enhanced their political status and assured their survival. The knights' increasing importance in the financial market and, mainly, their significant assistance to the royal administration brought them the support of those monarchs who benefited from their services.⁵³ Thus, despite the criticism of popes and ecclesiastics as well as, perhaps, the disappointment of the nobility, the knights could rely on the support of Western kings

⁵¹As to the Order's wealth and its distribution in Europe vis-à-vis the Holy Land, see Sylvia Schein, "The Templars: The Regular Army of the Holy Land and the Spearhead of the Army of Its Reconquest," in *I Templari: Mito e Storia*, eds. Giovanni Minnucci and Franca Sardi (Siena, 1987), pp. 16–17.

⁵²*Les registres de Nicolas III (1277–1280)*, ed. Jules Gay ("Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et Rome," 2d series, Vol. XIV [Paris, 1898–1932]), no. 167, p. 51.

⁵³J. Piquet, *Des banquiers au Moyen Âge: Les Templiers, étude de leurs opérations financières* (Paris, 1939), pp. 27 ff.

throughout the thirteenth century. The growing reliance on royal support, however, had its dangers, as it exposed the Order to changing national priorities, which might eventually work against it. This state of affairs, moreover, paved the way for the suppression of the Order by Philip the Fair.

The royal courts mark the difference between the early criticism of the Templars and the charges of heresy that ultimately brought the suppression of the Order in 1312. Bearing in mind that the Templars' main goal, like that of other Military Orders, was to combat the infidel,⁵⁴ being accused of neglecting the needs of the Holy Land could have legitimized Philip the Fair's action. The fall of Crusader Acre in 1291 could have been further corroboration of these accusations, casting the Templars as the main perpetrators of the Christian defeat in the Holy Land. Yet research into the trial of the Templars shows that the prosecution paid little attention to the Crusade and the Templars' alleged betrayal of the Holy Land. In most instances, including those of contemporary chroniclers, the arrest of the Templars was justified on the grounds of heresy, which was a mere reiteration of the Capetian court's version.

The 127 articles of accusation presented at the Templars' trial in France were reduced to 77 in England, but their essence remained the same. From the first royal instructions of September 22, 1307, until the last trial in 1311, the most serious accusations against the Templars can be summarized as follows:⁵⁵

- (1) New members had repudiated Christ, the Holy Virgin, and the saints during a secret ceremony.
- (2) The Templars committed a variety of sacrilegious acts upon a cross, a crucifix, or an image of Christ.
- (3) They kissed each other obscenely on all parts of their bodies.
- (4) They encouraged and practiced sodomy.⁵⁶
- (5) They exercised idolatry and revered an idol (Baphomet).

⁵⁴A. J. Forey, "The Military Orders and Holy War Against Christians in the Thirteenth Century," *English Historical Review*, CIV (January, 1989), 24.

⁵⁵Gilmour-Bryson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁵⁶Yet, during the trial in France, brother Ponzard de Cizy, preceptor of Payns, referred to the admittance of women to the Order and their abuse as an established practice. Another brother denied the charge of homosexuality by saying that he could always get a lovely woman when he wanted one, and that he had them frequently; see *Le Dossier de l'affaire des Templiers*, ed. Georges Lizerand (Paris, 1923), pp. 158–160; *Le procès des Templiers*, ed. Marcel Michelet (2 vols.; "Collection des documents inédits sur l'histoire de France" [Paris, 1841]), Vol. I, pp. 326 ff.; and the survey of Helen Nicholson, "Templar Attitudes Towards Women," *Medieval History*, 1 (1991), 74–80.

(6) They did not believe in the sacraments (this was added in 1308), and the priests of the Order did not consecrate the Host.

(7) The Grand Master and other dignitaries absolved brethren from their sins, despite the fact that many of these leaders were laymen (this was also added in 1308).

(8) The Templars sought gain for the Order by whatever means were at their disposal, whether lawful or not; chapter meetings and receptions were held at night in secret, under a heavy guard with only the knights present; any member who revealed the proceedings to an outsider was punished by imprisonment or death.⁵⁷

The charges of heresy brought against the Templars in 1307–1308 suggest that their negative image and the earlier criticisms played only a marginal role in the suppression of the Order. Whatever their accuracy, the accusations against the Templars are similar to the imputations which were directed against Pope Boniface VIII only five years earlier.⁵⁸ This similarity is reinforced by the chronicle of Aimeri de Peyrac, abbot of Moissac, who blamed the Templars of lese-majesty for supposedly plotting against the king.⁵⁹ This underscores the original approach of the Capetian court, which based its policy on new political premises, ones which were different from the feudal notions prevalent at the time. Still, in the early fourteenth century the concept of lese-majesty had not yet gained wide support and so could not be used to legitimize royal actions against knights who enjoyed ecclesiastical immunity. Furthermore, the premature use of such arguments could harm the king's image while the struggle against Boniface continued to cast long shadows. These considerations were behind the use of heresy charges which proved effective a few years earlier.

The king's lawyers publicized their version of the Templars' heresy and succeeded in turning public opinion in their favor. Their success is clearly reflected in contemporary sources. In reacting to the king's policy, fourteenth-century chroniclers did not link the arrest of the knights to their alleged treason in the Holy Land but to the harm they perpetrated on the most sublime Christian ethics. The contemporary mind seems to have been much more receptive to charges of idolatry, sacrilege, sodomy, and

⁵⁷M. Michelet (ed.), *Le procès des Templiers*, I, 89–96; II, 423. Malcolm Barber regarded the propagandistic campaign of Philip the Fair against the Templars as "a work of genius"; see his "Propaganda in the Middle Ages: The Charges Against the Templars," *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, 17 (1973), 57.

⁵⁸Sophia Menache, "Un peuple qui a sa demeure à part: Boniface VIII et le sentiment national français," *Francia*, 12 (1985), 193–208.

⁵⁹"E chronico Aimerici de Peyraco, abbatis Moissiacensis," *R.H.G.F.*, XXIII, 209.

secrecy,⁶⁰ than to the former criticism of the Templars' independent behavior, greed, and avarice. *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, however, after repeating the main charges against the Templars in the vernacular narrative, as publicized by the royal court, alluded as well to their treacherous pacts with the Moslems.⁶¹ The same charge was made by William of Plaisians in the meeting with Pope Clement V at Poitiers (May–June, 1308). According to the Capetian lawyer, "*per defectum ipsorum Terra Sancta dicitur per-dita et pactiones secretas cum Soldano sepius dicuntur fecisse.*"⁶²

Although Philip's propaganda never ignored the impact of the Crusade issue,⁶³ and Plaisians did remind Pope Clement of the Templars' betrayal of the Holy Land and their secret treaties with the Moslems, this was but an isolated aspect of the royal campaign which, nevertheless, managed to legitimize the arrest. The king's avoidance of the issue of the Crusades suggests that the royal entourage may not have believed that it would have served their purposes, while charges of heresy, sodomy, and blasphemy would have appealed far more effectively to the popular mind. And, indeed, there is hardly any pro-Templar sympathy or sorrow about their fate to be gleaned from the bulk of contemporary chronicles.⁶⁴ While opinions differed over the motivation for the arrest and the "division of labor" between the *rex et sacerdos*, support for the knights, if any, was the exception and it came too late, after the suppression of the Order at the

⁶⁰"Continuatio Chronici Guillelmi de Nangiaco," *R.H.G.F.*, XX, 595–596; "Continuatio chronici Girardi de Fracheto," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 29; "Extraits d'une chronique anonyme française finissant en 1308," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 137; "Fragment d'une chronique anonyme finissant en 1328," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 149; "Chronicon Guillelmi Scoti," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 205; "Excerpta e memoriali historiarum Johannis a Sancto Victore," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 649; "E floribus chronicorum . . . auctore Bernardo Guidonis," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 717; "Anonymum S. Martialis chronicon ad annum 1320 continuatum," *R.H.G.F.*, XXI, 813; "Chronique rimée attribuée à Geffroi de Paris," *R.H.G.F.*, XXII, 122–124; "Extraits d'une chronique anonyme intitulée Anciennes chroniques de Flandre," *R.H.G.F.*, XXII, 398; "E breviario historiarum Landulphi de Columna, canonici Carnotensis," *R.H.G.F.*, XXIII, 194; "E chronici Rotomagensis continuazione," *R.H.G.F.*, XXIII, 347; "Ex altera chronici Rotomagensis continuazione," *R.H.G.F.*, XXIII, 351.

⁶¹*Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, ed. Jules Viard (9 vols.; Paris, 1920–1937), VIII, 274–276.

⁶²"It was argued that because of their desertion and their having made secret treaties with the Moslems, the Holy Land was lost." See H. Finke (ed.), *Papsttum und Untergang des Tempelordens* (2 vols.; Münster, 1907), II, 139, 145.

⁶³As Jean Favier maintained, "La chrétienté ne se leva pas contre le Temple, certes, mais elle ne fera rien pour le défendre" (*op. cit.*, p. 44).

⁶⁴Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1990), pp. 175–190.

Council of Vienne.⁶⁵ Fourteenth-century accounts thus suggest that the Templars might have been a "failed ideal." As expressed by Gervais du Bus:

*Le templier que je [l'église] tant amoie
Et que tant honorés avoie,
M'ont fait despit et vilanie.*⁶⁶

Yet the disparity between the Templars' early image and the charges of heresy which led to their arrest minimizes the role of "public opinion" as a force in the whole affair. The trial appeared to have become the work of Philip the Fair and his lawyers,⁶⁷ the sole initiators and promoters of the suppression of the Temple. Still, it should be noted that toward the fourteenth century, the Templars having lost their Crusade aura and become an object of condemnation, Philip did not use the prevailing criticism of their deeds but levelled new charges of heresy against them. This discontinuity calls into question the weight to be ascribed to the Templars' treachery with respect to the Holy Land and the Crusade; on the other hand, the similarity with Boniface's trial, only five years earlier, do not enhance the charges of heresy either.

It is quite doubtful if the Templars were also "a failed ideal" from the point of view of the *Rex Christianissimus*.⁶⁸ Without re-examining the Crusader zeal of the King of France,⁶⁹ it would seem that Philip's approach to the Templars is better understood from the perspective of his domestic policy. It had been argued in the past that Philip the Fair was motivated by a search for sovereignty. In the words of Robert Fawtier, Philip was "*un dévot de la religion monarchique . . . un fanatique du dogme de l'autorité suprême des rois de France.*"⁷⁰ Though he acknowledged the likelihood

⁶⁵Sophia Menache, "Contemporary Attitudes Concerning the Templars' Affair: Propaganda's Fiasco?" *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (June, 1982), 137–139.

⁶⁶"The Templars whom I [the Church] loved so/ And have so greatly honored/ Have done me spite and evil." See Gervais du Bus, *Le Roman de Fauvel*, ed. A. Langfors (Paris, 1914–1919), p. 38.

⁶⁷On the division of labor between Philip the Fair and his lawyers much research had been done; see Sophia Menache, "Philippe le Bel—Genèse d'une image," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 62 (1984), 699.

⁶⁸There is still a possibility, although questionable, that Philip the Fair might have been convinced of the truth of the charges, given his apparent capacity for self-delusion and his strange and elusive personality. See R. H. Bautier, "Diplomatique et histoire politique: ce que la critique diplomatique nous apprend sur la personnalité de Philippe le Bel," *Revue Historique*, No. 259 (1978), 3–27.

⁶⁹Sylvia Schein, "Philip IV and the Crusade: A Reconsideration," in *Crusade and Settlement*, ed. P. W. Edbury (Cardiff, Wales, 1984), pp. 121–126.

⁷⁰Robert Fawtier, "L'Europe occidentale de 1270 à 1380," pt. 1, ed. G. Glotz, *Histoire Générale* (Paris, 1940), p. 301.

that the king could hardly read or understand his lawyers' theories of sovereignty, Professor Strayer, too, emphasized Philip the Fair's unconditional identification with the sanctity of the French monarchy which did not allow for independent or quasi-independent elements: "There could be local and subordinate powers, but in the last resort everyone had to acknowledge the supremacy of the king. Philip would attack anyone who seemed to challenge that supremacy—the pope, the bishops, the great feudal lords, and the communes."⁷¹

The question of whether or not the Templars were capable of threatening royal authority and, if so, if such a policy would be at all in their interest, is irrelevant. From the point of view of Philip the Fair the Templars appeared as a threat since they were an integral part of the feudal regime which the king and his ministers were committed to undermine. Research into the relationship between the Order and the Capetian Kings, however, leads to an unequivocal co-operation. Léopold Delisle proved that the Order rendered useful services to the French monarchy from the reign of Philip August until the arrest.⁷² Still, between 1292 and 1295 the Templars lost their dominant position within the royal financial administration, the bulk of the treasure being transferred to the Louvre. Philip continued to employ the knights' services until the arrest, nevertheless, on less regular financial commissions: as late as November 6, 1306, he authorized them to pay the wages of the soldiers who had served in Flanders.⁷³ Good relations between king and Order were further testified to by the support of Hugues de Pairaud, the Visitor of the Temple in France, for Philip the Fair against Pope Boniface VIII in June, 1303.⁷⁴ The Order received retribution a year later, when Philip recognized all Templar property in France (June, 1304).⁷⁵ Moreover, the Treasurer of the Temple in France was actually in the middle of auditing Norman demesne revenues at Rouen when he was arrested.⁷⁶

⁷¹J. Strayer, "Italian Bankers and Philip the Fair," in *Economy, Society and Government in Medieval Italy: Essays in Memory of Robert L. Reynolds*, eds. David Herlihy et al. (Kent, Ohio, 1969), p. 118.

⁷²Léopold Delisle, *Mémoire sur les opérations financières des Templiers* (1889; reprint, Geneva, 1975), pp. 40–61, 93–94: "J'espère avoir mis hors de contestation l'importance du rôle financier des Templiers, surtout en France, pendant la durée du XIII^e siècle. On ne saurait méconnaître ni la part qu'ils prirent alors au développement de la fortune publique, ni le concours qu'ils prêtent aux rois de France pour fonder et affermir l'ordre dans les finances de l'Etat."

⁷³Barber, *The Trial*, pp. 40–41.

⁷⁴*Documents relatifs aux Etats Généraux et Assemblées réunis sous Philippe le Bel*, ed. Georges Picot (Paris, 1901), nos. 14, 15, pp. 50, 53.

⁷⁵Hans Prutz, *Entwicklung und Untergang des Tempelherrenordens* (Berlin, 1888), pp. 302–303.

⁷⁶Delisle, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–61.

Philip's pre-1307 policy, therefore, demonstrates hardly any animosity toward the Templars. Nor had the king any grounds to criticize their administration of the Treasury. In these circumstances it becomes all the more imperative to ask what factors lay behind Philip's change of heart. The royal court was, it should be noted, in the process of rationalizing governmental functions. This fostered what can be called a "national" policy which reduced the involvement of foreigners to a minimum. From a financial-administrative perspective, moreover, the arrest of the Templars appears consistent with the persecution of Italians and Lombards (extorted in 1291-92, 1303-04, 1306, 1309-10, and perhaps twice more before the end of the reign),⁷⁷ as well as the expulsion of Jews (1306).⁷⁸ In other words, the first years of the fourteenth century were characterized by a movement to expel "foreign" elements from key positions in the royal administration. The arrest of the Templars thus appears to have been consistent with Philip's aim of recovering the control of finance countrywide. This tendency links the Jews, Lombards, and Templars, who were all leading factors in royal finance. Although ostensibly contradictory at the ideological level, this peculiar association of Jews and Christians was well known to contemporaries. In 1314, through the nobility's opposition to new taxes, Geffroi de Paris made the following claim:

*Roïs, encores as tu eu
(Au mains l'ont ta gent receu)
Des Templiers et l'argent el l'or,
Qui doit estre en ton tresor;
Des Juïs et des usuriers,
Et des Lombards les granz deniers.*⁷⁹

Italians, Jews, and, to a lesser extent, the Templars, were tempting targets in times of financial crisis.⁸⁰ For the king it was safer to attack foreigners or members of an international Order than to tax Frenchmen. It also probably

⁷⁷J. Strayer and Charles H. Taylor, *Studies in Early French Taxation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1939), p. 17. Harry A. Miskimin, *The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe: 1300-1460* (London, 1975), p. 121.

⁷⁸S. Schwarzfuchs, "The Expulsion of the Jews from France, 1306," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 75 (1967), 482-489.

⁷⁹"King you again have had/ (At least your men had received)/ From the Templars the silver and the gold,/ Which must be in your treasury;/ From Jews and from usurers,/ And from Lombards gros deniers." See "Chronique rimée attribuée à Geffroi de Paris," *R.H.G.F.*, XXII, 153; see also, "E chronico anonymi Cadomensis," *R.H.G.F.*, XXII, 25.

⁸⁰Jean Favier, "Les finances de Philippe le Bel," *Annuaire de l'Ecole pratique des hautes études*, IV^e section, 110 (1977-78), 647-648.

seemed morally preferable. Philip wanted to be a "constitutional king,"⁸¹ and taxation, except during real emergencies, was still considered improper behavior for a ruler.⁸² Moreover, Jews and Lombards had no support inside France and no powerful foreign protector. They could easily be accused of usury, or of dishonesty, in their dealings with the crown. However, such charges were insufficient to warrant a royal attack on a Military Order that enjoyed ecclesiastical immunity and special papal protection. The Templars were not Jews; they were Crusader knights who for nearly two hundred years had sacrificed their resources and lives in battle against the infidel. Most knights, particularly the leaders of the Order, were not foreigners either, but Frenchmen who resided in France. This unusual situation was behind the use of the charges of heresy against the Templars. Only such charges could invalidate the Templars' privileged ecclesiastical status and expose them to the manipulations of the French King. On the other hand, charges of greed, avarice, and treachery, which had frequently been leveled against Jews and Lombards as well,⁸³ could hardly justify royal actions against the knights.

Though the king solved the problem at the ideological level, he had still to face difficult challenges in practice: the arrest of the Templars—only a year after the general expulsion of the Jews and concurrent to the ongoing disengagement of the royal administration from the services of the Lombards—raises questions about who would fill their role. The quest for sovereignty, important as it was, could not alone satisfy royal needs. One can further ask whether this pursuit of sovereignty had broad support on which the king and his lawyers could rely. It was, in fact, rather easy for them to legitimize the royal policy against the Lombards and the Jews. These groups were unpopular and, at least in the case of Jews, their financial behavior very often incited charges of ritual murder and sacrilegious acts.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the Jews, Lombards, and Templars played a vital role

⁸¹Joseph Strayer, "Philip the Fair: A 'Constitutional' King," *American Historical Review*, 62 (October, 1956), 18–32.

⁸²Elizabeth Brown, "Taxation and Morality in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Conscience and Political Power and the Kings of France," *French Historical Studies*, 8 (Spring, 1973), 1–28.

⁸³Sophia Menache, "The King, the Church and the Jews: Some Considerations on the Expulsions from England and France," *Journal of Medieval History*, 13 (September, 1987), 226ff.

⁸⁴F. Raphael, "Le juif et le diable dans la civilisation de l'Occident," *Social Compass*, 19 (1972), 549–566; Maurice Kriegel, "Mobilisation politique et modernisation organique: Les expulsions de Juifs au Bas Moyen Age," *Archives des Sciences sociales des religions*, 46 (1978), 12–15.

in the financial market. The reflections of Geffroi de Paris uncover the economic crisis and social unrest that followed the expulsion of the Jews just one year before the arrest of the Templars:

*Le reaume en torne en l'empire:
Dont li crestien ont le pire . . .
Mes si li Juif demouré
Fussent ou reaume de France,
Crestien mainte grant aidance
Eussent en quoi il n'ont pas . . .
Car por po trouvoit on argent.
Or n'en treuve l'en nule gent
Qui veille l'un l'autre prester:
Si convient chascun endeter.⁸⁵*

The effects of the crisis were not uniform, however, nor did they influence the various socio-political groups to the same degree. While some were reduced to poverty by the lack of credit and the rising rates, there were others who benefited from the turn of events as they were released from the hated competition of Jews in both commerce and finance. The important question is whether the Capetian court could face the inherent challenge of a policy which provoked the simultaneous collapse of the leading financial elements in the realm. The disappearance of regular royal arrangements with professional financiers did, in fact, encourage new practices by which leading financial officials were expected to locate new resources for the crown. Actually, this was one of the main purposes of the arrest of the Templars, namely, to foster a new dynamic in the financial field, by patronizing a new breed of royal servants, i.e., skilled men dependent on the king and able to meet his financial needs. Enguerrand de Marigny, who rose to power after 1305, was especially competent in matters of finance.⁸⁶ There were also other able financiers, such as the Gayte family of Clermont in Auvergne,⁸⁷ or Raymond Ysalguier, a leading Toulousian money-changer who administered the confiscated Jewish property in Languedoc and advanced loans to the crown.⁸⁸ Thus, loans from royal officials, in part raised from the townsmen, became an important alterna-

⁸⁵ "The kingdom became an empire:/ Where Christians had the worst of it . . . / But if the Jews would remain/ In the Kingdom of France/ Christians would have in the meantime/ Great help which now they lack . . . / Because it is hard to find money./ We can find no one/ Who wants to loan:/ It is very profitable to get into debt." See Geoffroi de Paris, *R.H.G.F.*, XXII, 118–119.

⁸⁶ Jean Favier, *Un conseiller de Philippe le Bel: Enguerrand de Marigny* (Paris, 1963), pp. 98–108.

⁸⁷ *Les Journaux du Trésor de Philippe IV le Bel*, ed. Jules Viard (Paris, 1940), nos. 3419, 5117.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 5914, 5947.

tive source of credit for the king. This change was especially relevant for the receivers of *baillages* and *sénéchaussées*, who often combined government service with private trade or money-lending; they could use their private business connections to procure money for the crown. This was a significant alternative since an appreciable proportion of urban wealth was in the hands of the bourgeoisie. But beyond monetary considerations the king's action had considerable impact both at the political and the social levels.

The ambition of most of the bourgeoisie was to rise in social status; service to the crown in this and related ways became a tempting means of doing so.⁸⁹ Townsmen could provide the court of Philip the Fair with both the credit and the manpower it needed to consolidate its policy of centralization. The receivership of Champagne, for example, which had long been in the hands of Italians, was given in 1305 to French royal officials, who retained it until the end of the reign.⁹⁰ Of the eighty-nine Italians who worked for Philip the Fair in 1285, only sixteen remained in any official capacity with the court after 1305—this number includes Biche and Mouche, who died in 1307, and the thoroughly Gallicized Betin Caucinel.⁹¹ From the perspective of long-term royal policy, therefore, the arrest of the Templars now acquires a new meaning. It no longer appears as the unprecedented and impulsive act of a hard-pressed king. Rather, it assumes a place in the long process through which Philip the Fair fostered the involvement of the *tiers état* in royal administration and finance, after it proved its devotion to the crown in the Assembly. The arrest of the Templars, therefore, like the expulsion of the Jews and Lombards, further strengthened the alliance between the king and the bourgeoisie. The growing reliance on townsmen can be even better understood in the light of the socio-economic and political processes of the times, the gradual evolution from feudal patterns—in which “foreigners” traditionally played financial roles—to include the employment of indigenous sectors. From 1307, therefore, the townsmen⁹² and, in particular, the royal officers could make their

⁸⁹Fryde saw in this development the process of the formation of the *noblesse de robe*; see E. B. Fryde and M. M. Fryde, “Public Credit, With Special Reference to North-Western Europe,” *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, eds. M. M. Postan et al. (London, 1963), pp. 478–483.

⁹⁰D. Ozanam, “Les receveurs de Champagne,” in *Recueil de travaux offert à M. Clovis Brunel* (2 vols.; Paris, 1955), II, 344–345.

⁹¹Joseph Strayer, “Italian Bankers,” p. 117.

⁹²Sophia Menache, “A Propaganda Campaign in the Reign of Philip the Fair,” *French History*, 4 (December, 1990), 427–454.

way to court, that is, to social prestige and economic profit, without encountering serious competition.⁹³

In sum, the arrest of the Templars in the Kingdom of France was integral to a political process in which the king promoted townsmen to key positions in administration and finance. Although the original criticism of the Temple facilitated the royal campaign against them, it does not convincingly explain the timing of the arrest. Moreover, Philip the Fair's case against the Templars was based on new arguments, which had proven their efficacy in the struggle against Pope Boniface VIII. In this context, the words of King Jayme II acquire much relevance. When expressing his reservations about transferring the Templars' property to the Hospital, the Aragonese king claimed:

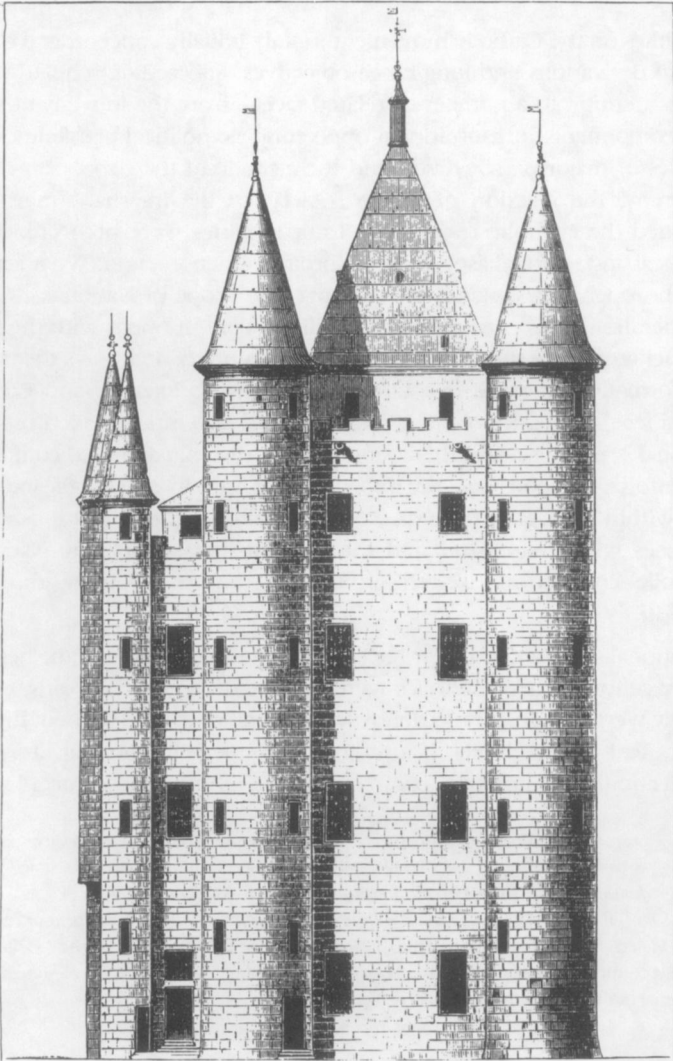
*Tanta esset potestas, quod inde generari posset maximum periculum regi predicto, gentibus et terris suis, eo quia, si hospitalarii vel eorum magister nollent observare fidelitatem ipsi regi, quod absit, esset in eorum manu inducere in terram dicti regis quamcumque aliam potestatem vellent, nec posset eis inhiberi propter magnam opportunitatem, quam inde haberent, consideratis dictis castris et eorum fortitudinibus, que tenerent in frontariis et aliis partibus regnorum dicti regis.*⁹⁴

True, one can argue that once Jayme II saw that the abolition of the Temple was inevitable, he wanted to make sure he had his share of the spoils. Moreover, France was not Aragon, and it did not live under the Moslem threat. Still, the reign of Philip the Fair was a turbulent period for the kingdom, characterized by socio-economic tension and political unrest. And, as Jayme II complained of the Hospital, the Templars were no less of a threat. They might be Christians, Crusaders, and Frenchmen, but they were also powerful and exempt from royal surveillance. This seems to have been the main reason why, after finding an appropriate substitute on the financial and administrative level but one more dependent on royal support, Philip the Fair leveled charges of heresy against the Templars, not stopping until

⁹³In 1292 the royal agents succeeded in getting the inhabitants of Saintonge and Poitou to pay a fougage of 6 s.t. a hearth for six years in return for the expulsion of the Jews. A similar policy was carried out in Anjou and Maine (1288) by Charles II of Sicily, who in return was granted three sous from each hearth by a council of prelates and nobles; see J. Strayer, *Early French Taxation*, p. 19. Still, the expulsion of Jews in 1306 was met with reservations among the clergy; see Sophia Menache, "The King, the Church and the Jews," pp. 223–236.

⁹⁴"So much power could indeed cause the greatest danger to the foresaid king, his men and lands, that is, if the Hospitallers or their master would fail to show due loyalty to the king, they have the power to introduce whatever alien power they want to, without the king being able to prevent them from doing so, bearing in mind the strongholds and fortresses they had on the frontier and other regions of the foresaid king's realm." See Finke, *op. cit.*, II, 212–216.

Pope Clement V pronounced the final suppression of the Order in the Council of Vienne. In this regard, the heavy reliance of the Templars on royal patronage from the thirteenth century onwards was fraught with dire consequences, as it gave national kings, in this case Philip the Fair, almost complete control over the Order. One can further doubt whether in the eyes of the Most Christian King, “so much power could cause the greatest danger to the king.” It seems rather, that so much royal power could and, indeed, actually did “cause the greatest danger,” but to the knights.





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Sodomy and the Knights Templar

ANNE GILMOUR-BRYSON

*Department of History
University of Melbourne*

IN THIS ARTICLE, I will analyze testimony relevant to the charges of the Inquisition that members of the order of Knights Templar throughout Christendom practiced homosexual¹ acts of various sorts from illicit kisses to sodomy.² I intend to examine the testimony of Templars in

A much shorter version of this article was given at the International Medieval Conference at Leeds in 1994. I am indeed grateful to Giles Constable, John Fout, and the two anonymous reviewers for *JHS*, for their encouragement and most helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank the Department of History, University of Melbourne, the Faculty of Arts, and the Australian Research Committee for funds and leave, enabling me to pursue this research abroad. My thanks go as well to the staff of the Vatican Library; the Vatican Archives; the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris); the Robarts Library, the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, St. Michael's University Library, the Victoria University Library, all in Toronto; and the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne. I was aided by Alexandra Pavlowski and Adina Hamilton in parts of this research.

¹The term "homosexual," according to many modern scholars, can only be used from perhaps the nineteenth century forward. According to others, a "gay" or homosexual subculture existed in Shakespeare's England or Renaissance Italy. See, among others, Joseph Cady, "'Masculine Love,' Renaissance Writing, and the 'New Invention' of Homosexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 22 (1991): 9–40; Arthur N. Gilbert, "Conceptions of Homosexuality and Sodomy in Western History," *Journal of Homosexuality* ("Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality," ed. Salvatore J. Licata and Robert P. Petersen) 6, nos. 1/2 (Fall/Winter 1980–81): 57–67; Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (Boston, 1982); Guido Ruggiero, "Sexual Criminality in the Early Renaissance: Venice, 1338–1358," *Journal of Social History* 8 (1975): 18–37; Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (Chicago, 1991). The term "homosexual" was not in use in the medieval period, and I am using it throughout this article purely for convenience.

²See Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge, 1978), for the best general study of all the trials. On the functioning of the inquisition, see the *Liber sextus decretalium* of Pope Boniface VIII, a continuation and commentary on the *Liber extra* of Gregory IX. I

hearings that took place in France and Italy for the most part, since it was in these areas that confessions of guilt were given. My aim is to illustrate how members of the order reacted to the questions concerning these matters, how they described what occurred, and in what terms.

THE EVIDENCE

This evidence is by no means unknown.³ Once the Vatican Archives were opened to scholars and the texts of the trials began to be published in the late nineteenth century, the depositions were available to scholars

have no access to them in Australia but have consulted them on this subject in the Vatican Library, Toronto, and Paris. Many printed editions exist.

³Published Templar trials may be found in Jules Michelet, ed., *Le procès des Templiers*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1845–46; new edition, Paris, 1987), for Paris, the Pontifical Commission, and the hearing in the Elne; Konrad Schottmüller, ed., *Der Untergang des Templer-Ordens* (Berlin, 1887; reprint, New York, 1970), for part of the hearing at Poitiers, a short version of the hearings in England, and Cyprus, the hearing at Brindisi, and an abridged version of the hearings in the Patrimony of St. Peter (complete edition in Anne Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *The Trial of the Templars in the Papal State and the Abruzzi* [Città del Vaticano, 1982]); Roger Sève and Anne-Marie Chagny-Sève, *Le procès des Templiers d'Auvergne, 1300–1311* (Paris, 1986), for the hearings at Clermont-Ferrand; Telesforo Bini, “Dei Tempieri e del loro processo in Toscana,” in *Atti della Reale Accademia Lucchese di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, tome 13 (1845), pp. 400–506, for the hearing in Pisa; Heinrich Finke, *Papsttum und Untergang des Templerordens*, tome 2 (Munich, 1907) (for the rest of Poitiers, pp. 329–42; Carcassonne, pp. 321–24; Chinon, pp. 324–29; Lerida, pp. 364–76; Navarre, pp. 378–79; and some small hearings possibly in Provence, pp. 342–64); Hans Prutz, *Entwicklung und Untergang des Tempelherrenordens* (Berlin, 1888), for Bigorre, Bayeux, Caen (cf. Finke, 2:313–16), Cahors (cf. Finke, 2:316–21), Chaumont, Clermont (much longer version in Sève and Chagny-Sève), Renneville, Troyes, and an inventory of material for Provence; David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, tome 2 (London, 1737), for England, Ireland, and Scotland. A complete edition of the Cyprus trial in English will be published by Brill in early 1997, ed. Anne Gilmour-Bryson. Additional relevant documentary material may be found in Just-Marie Raynouard, *Monuments relatifs à la condamnation des chevaliers du Temple* (Paris, 1813); Georges Lizerand, *Le dossier de l'affaire des templiers* (Paris, 1923; reprint, Paris, 1964); Renzo Caravita, *Rinaldo de Concorrezzo* (Florence, 1964), for the proceedings of the Council in Ravenna; for the Council of Sens, see Philippe Labbé, *Sacrosancta Concilia*, vol. 11 (Paris, 1671–72), pt. 2, cols. 1535–36; Pierre Dupuy, *Traitez concernant l'histoire de France: Sçavoir la condamnation des Templiers avec quelques actes* (Paris, 1654; reprint, Venice, 1975), summarizes most trials but with information that is most definitely unreliable; further documentation on England is available in William Dugdale and Roger Dodsworth, eds., *Monasticon anglicanum*. (London, 1661; new edition, London, 1846), 6, pt. 2:813–50. These editions contain references to the manuscripts to be found in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, the Archives Nationales, and the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris) for the most part. An old, but still helpful, list of the location of various Templar bulls, protocols, and other documentary material appears in Schottmüller, 1:706–19 (though some of those listed have been lost.)

who could read Latin.⁴ The interpretation of this material is a very different matter. Some historians such as Gershon Legman are convinced of the Templars' guilt on the matter of the practice of homosexual acts, though not on the reasons for the indecent acts carried out at reception ceremonies.⁵ Konrad Schottmüller, unlike Hans Prutz, was convinced of their innocence. Joseph Marie Antoine Delaville le Roulx did not seem able to make up his mind. Heinrich Finke wrote about the entire Templar affair in great detail. None of them really explored the texts related to accusations of occurrences of homosexual practices themselves in order to derive the maximum amount of information from them.⁶ But in any examination of Inquisition testimony, it is impossible to lay aside the effect that torture must have had on the answers given. Work on the answers of all the Templars in all the trials for which we have extant manuscripts has shown that there is a very close correlation between the use of torture, which appears to have been widely used in France and Italy, and confessions of guilt.⁷ In other countries, for example, Cyprus, England, Ireland, and the Iberian peninsula, where torture was not used,

⁴On material in the Vatican Archives, see Leonard Boyle, *A Survey of the Vatican Archives and of Its Medieval Holdings* (Toronto, 1972). The Templar trial material is to be found in the *Archivum Arcis*, now known as the "Fondo Castel S. Angelo," in Boyle, pp. 58–60.

⁵Gershon Legman, *The Guilt of the Templars* (New York, 1966), also available in French as *La culpabilité des Templiers*, trans. Martine Laroche and Hervé Laroche (Spain, 1973), furnishes a highly individual and not very reliable version of Templar guilt. This volume also includes a very useful excerpt by Henry Lea on the Templar trials, the testimony, and torture. Legman's contribution takes up the long first chapter. On the Templars and homosexuality see pp. 4 and 6–7, where Legman argues that "de Molay was homosexual." On pp. 18–19 he insists that the origin of homosexual practices for the Templars came from their close association with the East. On pp. 102–3 he discusses what he sees as the inevitable connection between the sexual accusations and those of idolatry or devil worship. He argues also that the homosexual practices may have originated as hero worship of young Templars for their leaders (p. 107). The evidence he adduces on p. 118 to prove the homosexual nature of James of Molay's behavior is far from sufficient to prove the case (pp. 107–8). On p. 109, he deems much more serious than occasional same-sex acts the "formal dedication of some kind announced and betrayed at the secret initiation by ritual nudity and by the demanded sexual and scatological kisses." Legman concludes with his conviction that Templar "homosexuality . . . was part & parcel of its resistance to medieval Christianity" (p. 129).

⁶On Schottmüller, Prutz, and Finke, see n. 4 above. A discussion of Joseph Marie Antoine Delaville le Roulx's writings on the Templars appears in Emmanuel-Guillaume Rey, "Etude sur le Procès des Templiers," in *Revue de Champagne et de Brie*, deuxième série (1891), p. 724. All these authors used archival documents widely, publishing many of them for the first time.

⁷On this question see Barber, *Trial of the Templars*, p. 56 and elsewhere; Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, pp. 16–18; Peter Partner, *The Murdered Magicians* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 59–61.

Templars in the main failed to confess.⁸ In spite of the prior existence of torture, attested to by many Templars before the Pontifical Commission, most answers in that hearing seem to have been given in a manner that describes daily happenings in the order in a realistic manner. After all, under the principles of the Inquisition, once a witness had confessed to any of the most serious allegations—the denial of Christ, for example—he had satisfied the criteria to receive absolution provided he promised not to sin again. From that point onward, he could tell the truth without fear of worsening his situation, and this is just what most of the men seem to have done. Notaries, surprisingly, wrote down minor details elicited from the testimony that would never have been deliberately fabricated because there would have been no reason to do so. As an example, various witnesses commented on their specific duties within the order, travels undertaken, the conduct of perfectly normal or standard religious services, and the frequency of attendance at mass. Information of this sort was unrelated to the questioning or to the eventual outcome for the particular witness testifying.

THE TEMPLAR ORDER

The Order of Knights Templar, founded in Jerusalem in 1120, became the Western world's first military order.⁹ Its exclusively male brethren were devoted to a dual role as members of a religious order who took the normal three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, but who also undertook a fighting role in the Holy Land.¹⁰ Their ideology can be seen both in the Templar Rule itself, and in Bernard of Clairvaux's highly idealized portrait of them written about 1128.¹¹ Yet neither of these sources enables us to form a clear picture of the actual behavior of these men, who have left virtually no written material behind that might illuminate their own thought and behavior. Surveys of comments made by popes and chroniclers in the period 1128–1291 indicate that while considerable criticism was made of all three major military orders, Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic knights, the Templars were not generally crit-

⁸ Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, pp. 17–26. Torture may have been used at the very end of the English hearings, affecting the testimony of the three witnesses confessing at least some guilt.

⁹ On the founding of the order, see Malcolm Barber, "The Origins of the Order of the Temple," *Studia Monastica* 12 (1970): 220–39, and his *The New Knighthood* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1–37.

¹⁰ On the Templars' fighting role, see Barber, *New Knighthood*, pp. 64–148.

¹¹ Judith Mary Upton-Ward, ed., *The Rule of the Templars* (Woodbridge, 1992); and Bernard of Clairvaux, "In Praise of the New Knighthood," in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Treatises III* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1977), pp. 127–67.

icized more often, or more severely, than the other similar groups.¹² Certain notable chroniclers such as William of Tyre and Matthew Paris were frequently critical of them, but they were also critical of any group posing a threat to episcopal authority.¹³ The Order of the Temple was an exempt order, subject only to the papacy, and not normally the object of the usual episcopal monastic visitations. Most criticism leveled at the order revolved around its seeming arrogance and pride, its perceived responsibility for some of the military failures in the Holy Land, and, most of all, its alleged possession of wealth and power. The allegations concerning Templar wealth appear to be basically unfounded, but the Templars' role as international bankers and money lenders persuaded some contemporary critics to believe in the existence of very large amounts of funds in the Templar treasury.¹⁴

The perception of the Templars as arrogant and prideful may have stemmed from the Templars' much greater knowledge of the Holy Land, and their need to cooperate at times with the Muslims. Outsiders, crusaders on their first visit to the Holy Land, often believed immediate and hasty military activity to be the best course. Members of the military orders regularly counseled otherwise. It would not be unlikely that the Templars at times seemed insufferably know-it-all to those who had just arrived from the West, since they were apparently friendly with some local Arabs and most certainly understood the extreme difficulties in taking and, more difficult indeed, in keeping the Holy Land with an insufficient number of troops.

THE CHARGES AGAINST THE ORDER

Between 1307 and 1311, the military order of the Knights Templar was charged with permitting and even advocating a wide variety of seemingly heretical acts, and the members themselves were imprisoned, interrogated by tribunals of the Inquisition, charged with up to 127 articles of heresy, blasphemy, sacrilege, improper religious practices, and other

¹²Helen Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights* (Leicester, 1993), contains an excellent list of contemporary sources mentioning all three major military orders; see also Ansgar Konrad Wildermann, *Die Beurteilung des Templerprozesses bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg i/B, 1971).

¹³William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done across the Sea*, 2 vols., trans. Emily Babcock and A. C. Krey (New York, 1943); and the edition by Robert B. C. Huygens, ed., *Chronicon*, 2 vols., Corpus Christianorum—continuatio medievalis, vol. 63 (Turnhout, 1986); Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, 3 vols., ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series 95 (London, 1890).

¹⁴On Templar finances see Léopold Delisle, *Mémoire sur les opérations financières des Templiers* (Paris, 1889; reprint, Geneva, 1975); and Léon-Louis Borelli de Serres, *Recherches sur divers services publics du XIIIe au XVIIe siècle*, vol. 3, "Le trésor royal de Philippe IV à Philippe VI" (Paris, 1909).

perceived faults in their religious life.¹⁵ In 1310 approximately sixty were executed. Although all these actions were taken in at least the name of the pope, in fact, they seem to have been at the instigation of the French king, Philip IV. The pope complained in writing to the king about Philip's interference in what should have been an ecclesiastical matter: the arrest of all members of a renowned religious order. Many of these accusations were completely unrelated to heresy or any other impropriety.¹⁶ Articles 30–33 of the alleged offenses referred to the exchange of various illicit kisses, specifically on the spine, lower back, buttocks, anus, chest, stomach, or penis, presumably a reference to homosexual tendencies on the part of some members of the order.¹⁷ E. G. Rey had an ingenious rationale for seemingly “shameful practices”: Since the Templars spent a long time facedown, one behind the other, during the reception ceremony, strangers peeking at this ritual could have mistaken what was going on, believing that they were watching some sort of homosexual act being committed.¹⁸ The few descriptions of initiation ceremonies extant do not, in fact, suggest that the candidates lay prostrate before the receiver. More seriously, article 40 specifically referred to widespread permission being accorded to new members regarding the commission of homosexual acts within the order: “that brothers said to those they received that they could unite carnally with one another.”¹⁹ The next five articles of accusation stated that such acts were “licit,” that members “should perform and suffer them,” and that, moreover, some or many members did so.²⁰

Few Templars confessed to any guilt regarding the commission of homosexual acts, although most agreed that such permission was given to them.²¹ Considerably more often, the inquisitors obtained confessions regarding the kiss on the mouth, which was licit and usual, less often

¹⁵For a numbered list of all the articles of accusation in Latin, see Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial* (n. 3 above), pp. 74–84; the original list appeared in the papal bull *Faciens misericordiam*, *Regestum Clementis papae V (1305–1314)*, 7 vols. (Rome, 1885–92), nos. 3402–3515, 3584–85. An unnumbered list may be found also in Michelet, ed. (n. 3 above), 1:89–96.

¹⁶See Anne Gilmour-Bryson, “L’eresia e i Templari ‘Oportet et haereses esse,’” *Ricerca di storia sociale e religiosa*, NS (1983): 101–14.

¹⁷Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, p. 76.

¹⁸Rey (n. 6 above), p. 729.

¹⁹Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, p. 77.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Jean Favier notes in his preface to the reprint of Michelet, 1:viii, that in reality neither idolatry nor sodomy has “anything much to do with the discredit of the Temple.” Idolatry, like widespread sodomy, has been discounted as a reality by most modern scholars.

regarding the kiss on lower parts of the body.²² Some definite testimony relating to same-sex acts did occur in England (but only by a nonmember of the order),²³ France, and Italy. No confessions of guilt on these matters were received in the Iberian peninsula or Cyprus, or from English Templars themselves.²⁴ Confessions regarding serious sin, including sexual sin, were all received in areas where torture was used. Since many statements regarding such torture were received by the inquisitors at the Pontifical Commission hearings, it is entirely plausible that no instance of permission to unite carnally was ever given to anyone.

Before considering sodomy and other homosexual acts carried out by the all-male members of the Templar order, it is necessary to look at the issue of what was understood about homosexual acts, particularly sodomy, in the medieval period and before.²⁵ Jacques Le Goff stated that "the history of medieval sodomy has not been written—neither regarding the practice of it, nor the theory."²⁶ In the early Middle Ages it is evident that a confusion existed when the word "sodomy" was used.²⁷ This confusion is partially related to the very different views expressed by historians and theologians in the last fifty years on the original mean-

²² See the accusations, Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, p. 76. James Noel Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London, 1982), p. 115, stresses that any word or expression that indicates the "back or its lower part could of course be used [as could] buttocks . . . for anus." He also mentioned (p. 142) that the verb form *mingere*, the one used in accusation 12 and normally translated as "urinate," was used in Latin for "ejaculate." It is also noteworthy that accusation 62, which stated that Templars were ordered to "suffer" carnal relations from other members, used the verb *patior*, the one used specifically in Latin for the "passive role in intercourse" (Adams, p. 189). No published work exists listing the hundreds of references to illicit kisses. When my compilation of answers given in all the trials is published, specific references to each statement of guilt in this area will be available.

²³ See my essay, "The London Templar Trial Testimony: 'Truth, Myth or Fable,'" in *The World Explored: Essays in Honour of Laurie Gardiner*, ed. Anne Gilmour-Bryson (Melbourne, 1993), p. 50.

²⁴ See n. 4 above.

²⁵ For Greek and Roman views of homosexuality, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vols. 2 and 3 (Paris, 1984; London, 1987–88); David Halperin, John Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin, eds., *Before Sexuality* (Princeton, NJ, 1990); Eva Canterella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

²⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1964), cited on p. 2 of Claude Courouve, "Les origines de la repression de l'homosexualité," 1978, Collection archives des homosexualités, n.p. For the standard canonical definition of sodomy, see Raoul Naz, ed., *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique* (Paris, 1962), fasc. 41, cols. 1064–65, which points out that sodomy can be either "perfect," when complete relations between members of the same sex occur, or "imperfect," when carried out by persons of a different sex.

²⁷ Pierre Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials* (Toronto, 1984), discusses the content of most early penitentials.

ing of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁸ Some recent scholars have stated that theologians used the term sodomy for a bewildering variety of illicit sex acts.²⁹ Michel Foucault called sodomy “that utterly confused category,” and the sodomite himself “a temporary aberration” in the preindustrial period.³⁰ John Boswell, whose book of 1980, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, is still the major work in the field, insists that in the eighth and ninth centuries, “sodomy” referred either to any illicit sex act, even heterosexual liaisons between men of the world and women in religious life, or to all “non-procreative and some potentially reproductive sex acts.”³¹ Vern Bullough agrees essentially with Boswell, stressing medieval writers’ disinclination to define sodomy when mentioning it.³² Early penitentials of the sixth or seventh century did

²⁸ See Romano Canosa, *Storia di una grande paura* (Milan, 1991), p. 20, who refers to the laws of Alfonso the Wise (1252–84), who understood “sodomy” to have received its name from the sins of the inhabitants of Sodom; Samuel Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings* (Philadelphia, 1985), who believes that sodomy was not implicated in most biblical references to it; Guy Ménard, *De Sodome à l'exode: Jalons pour une théologie de la libération gaie* (Laval, Canada, 1982), p. 81, who considers it impossible to determine what the New Testament mentions of possible homosexual acts mean, but who states on p. 86 that regarding the Fathers of the Church, the sin of Sodom was considered to be sodomy. Vern L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York, 1976), p. 181, asserts that even by the first century C.E. Philo Judaeus and Josephus did “equate homosexuality with the sin of Sodom.” The subject has also been discussed extensively by Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1979); Peter Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Homosexuality* (London, 1980); and Derek Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London, 1955), who stresses that the sin of Sodom was the sin of failure to provide hospitality, a view echoed by John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980), and many biblical scholars. Philippe Ariès, “Réflexions sur l'histoire de l'homosexualité,” in his *Sexualités occidentales*, ed. André Béjin and Philippe Ariès (Paris, 1982), p. 82, describes the word “sodomy” as deriving from the behavior of the men of Sodom: either sexual intercourse against nature, “in the manner of a dog,” or sex between males, also considered against nature. One of the most balanced discussions can be found in Eric Fuchs, “L'homosexualité dans la perspective d'une théologie de l'altérité,” in *L'église et l'homosexuel: Un plaidoyer*, ed. John McNeill (Geneva, 1982), pp. 216–17. There is no doubt whatever that by the fourth or fifth century, if not before, the sin of Sodom had come to be thought of as “sodomy” in the sense of illicit, most often anal, sex.

²⁹ Judith C. Brown, *Immodest Acts* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 12–18.

³⁰ Foucault, 1:43, 101.

³¹ Boswell, p. 203. St. Boniface included as sodomy all sex acts not carried out within marriage, but not specifically same-sex anal sex; Hincmar of Reims defined sexual acts *contra naturam* to include all ejaculations not including the possibility of conception that did not occur within a legitimate marital union. Clearly, heterosexual anal intercourse or masturbation would fall into this definition of sodomy.

³² Vern L. Bullough, “The Sin against Nature and Homosexuality,” in Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage, *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church* (Buffalo, NY, 1982), pp. 55–71.

describe sexual acts explicitly, but such specificity was often omitted by later medieval church writers when it was thought that the descriptions themselves might lead the faithful into sin.³³ Pierre Payer firmly states in *Sex and the Penitentials* that in connection with the use of various terms for sodomy in early penitentials, "This study has suggested that the use of these terms probably refers to male anal intercourse."³⁴ Romano Canosa agrees with him, pointing out that Peter Damian had described the four possible sexual acts between males clearly and realistically around 1050. In an index of increasing gravity, Damian considered first and not very grave, solitary masturbation; next, mutual masturbation between two males; third, intrafemoral coitus; and, last and worst, complete sodomization.³⁵ Damian was, of course, referring only to clerics who engaged in same-sex acts, but he concluded that this crime was the "worst of all as it carried with it the death of the body, the destruction of the soul, the corruption of the flesh, the extinction of the . . . mind, and the fleeing of the Holy Spirit from the body."³⁶ As will be seen below, in the case of the Templar trial in the Auvergne, it was perfectly clear that the witness there was describing male anal intercourse. But a problem arises, nevertheless: Can we be sure that all inquisitors and all witnesses understood the term "sodomy," or, more frequently, when they referred

³³ Bullough and Brundage, pp. 60–62. See also James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), esp. pp. 166–67.

³⁴ Payer, p. 36. See also John McNeill and Helen Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York, 1983); Giorgio Picasso et al., *A pane e acqua* (Italy, 1986), for a useful translation of Burchard of Worms into Italian; X. Ochoa and A. Diez, eds., *S. Raimondus de Pennafort* (1175/80–1275), tome B (Rome, 1976), col. 845, in which sodomy is referred to in Augustinian terms as a very grave sin, worse than adultery, a sin that even destroys humankind. The excerpt refers to sodomy as a sex act not performed in the right organ. Tome C (Rome, 1978) col. 986, allows the wife to put away her husband if he commits sodomy (presumably upon her). Thomas of Chobham (1158–1233), in his *Summa Confessorum*, ed. F. Broomfield (Louvain, 1968), pp. 398–401, wrote of "the sin against nature," when a man makes use of his wife but not in the proper place. It may occur between men or between women, when they act like "brute animals." The passage refers later to Lot's action as that of providing his virgin daughters to those outside his house to prevent the even worse sin of sodomy performed on the male visitors. On sodomy see also Norbert Brieskorn, ed., *De Summa Confessorum des Johannes von Erfurt* (Frankfurt, 1981), 2:643–44, which, while deploring sodomy as a homosexual act, does permit a man to commit sodomy upon his wife if she is pregnant and vaginal intercourse might harm the fetus; and Alain de Lille, *Liber Poenitentialis*, ed. Jean Longère (Louvain, 1965), p. 111, for punishment of clerics who commit sodomy.

³⁵ Canosa, p. 13; and see the text in translation in Pierre Payer, ed. and trans., *Book of Gomorrah: An Eleventh-Century Treatise against Clerical Homosexual Practices* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1982).

³⁶ Canosa, p. 14.

to men being told that they might have sex with one another, what did this phrase entail?³⁷

In general, even by the time of Gratian, sexual sins *contra naturam* appear to have been catalogued using the Augustinian definition of a male using a part ("member") of his wife for purposes for which it was not intended.³⁸ This bewildering definition obviously defines as sodomy various acts that might take place during heterosexual intercourse as well as acts that might occur between men though not between women. By this definition oral sex, intrafemoral sex, or heterosexual anal sex would be sodomy. The third Lateran Council of 1179 was the first ecumenical council to give precise penalties for the commission of this act. Ecclesiastics were to be expelled from their orders or confined in monasteries. Laymen were to be excommunicated and removed from the company of the faithful. And in a sentence directly relevant to the alleged activities of senior members of the Templar order with new recruits, "The worst was sodomy between spiritual fathers and spiritual sons."³⁹ This was precisely the accusation against the Templars in 1307: that the receiver of new members, an older and usually high-ranking member of the order, enjoined the new and much younger recruits to permit sex between the brethren on demand.⁴⁰

It would seem that at various times the official penalty for proven commission of homosexual acts was extremely severe. What is missing, unfortunately, is any knowledge of how often, if at all, these penalties were carried out. For example, Emperor Valentinian had punished homosexuality with burning at the stake in 390, revived in the Theodosian Code.⁴¹ The penalty for persisting in the act of sodomy was particularly severe in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, where in 1120, at the time of the founding of the Templar Order, a council enacted a canon directing the punishment as death by burning.⁴² If an adult had been found to be a

³⁷ Guy Poirier, "Sodomiques et bougerons: Imagologie homosexuelle à la Renaissance" (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, August 1990).

³⁸ Bullough and Brundage, p. 62. See Saint Augustine, *Treatises on Marriage and other Subjects*, ed. Ray Joseph Deferrari, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 27 (Washington, DC, 1955), p. 25.

³⁹ Canosa (n. 28 above), p. 14.

⁴⁰ On the age of Templars at their recruitment and after see Alan J. Forey, "Towards a Profile of the Templars in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick*, ed. Malcolm Barber (London, 1994), pp. 196–204; and Anne Gilmour-Bryson, "Age-Related Data from the Templar Trials," in *Aging and the Aged in Medieval Europe*, ed. Michael M. Sheehan, CSB (Toronto, 1989), pp. 127–40.

⁴¹ See Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven* (England, 1990), pp. 207 and 320–23; and for a fuller discussion, see Boswell (n. 28 above), pp. 122–24.

⁴² Bullough and Brundage (n. 32 above), p. 63.

sodomite, he was to be burned.⁴³ As so often occurs, nevertheless, we have almost no evidence whatever that allows us to know whether such punishments ever took place.⁴⁴

In dealing with the accusations of homosexuality leveled against the Templars, we should consider not only the early definition of sodomy, that of the period of the penitentials, a definition that most certainly appears not to have been necessarily related exclusively to male anal sex, but rather the prevailing view found in the writings of those who influenced theologians in the early fourteenth century, the period of the Templar trials.⁴⁵

Albertus Magnus was one of the most influential theologians to discuss sodomy and to differentiate it from masturbation, adultery, fornication, and bestiality. We may credit him with the statement that homosexuality defied “grace, reason, and nature.”⁴⁶ He insisted that sodomy was the worst of these sins.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, by this time, Albert the Great seems to have assumed that his readers knew what sodomy was since he failed to define it except as sexual relations between persons of the same gender, and consequently we have the possibility that women in lesbian relationships were considered to be committing sodomy. Boswell suggests that other writings of Albertus Magnus clearly show that he intended sodomy to refer principally to anal intercourse between males.⁴⁸

⁴³Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, vol. 21 (Venice, 1726), col. 264, cap. 9.

⁴⁴According to Foucault, the Romans considered sodomy not to be unnatural at all, albeit shameful for the man who is the recipient of the act (see Foucault [n. 25 above], 3:24). More recent work on this topic can be found in Canterella (n. 25 above), p. 151 (for a specific exhortation to practice sodomy) and pp. 182–83.

⁴⁵Early Christian views of homosexuality may well have been influenced by Philo, who said, “Those who during intercourse bring about the destruction of the seed are undoubtedly enemies of nature.” His condemnation of homosexuality said sternly, “Like a bad farmer, the homosexual lets the fertile land lie fallow and toils night and day with the rest of land from which no fruit at all can be expected,” cited in Ranke-Heinemann, p. 20. Vincent of Beauvais (1190–1264) stated that the vice of sodomy is the third type of sexual sin, occurring between two men or two women, citing Rom. 1:26 (*Bibliotheca Mundi seu Speculi Maioris* [Douai, 1624; reprint, Graz, 1964], t. 3, cols. 1367–74). Gautier of Metz, writing in the mid-thirteenth century, discussed the destruction of Sodom, blaming it for its “great and enormous sin,” the nature of which is not specified. See William Caxton, ed., *Mirror of the World*, Early English Text Society (Oxford, 1913), p. 83.

⁴⁶Boswell, p. 316, quoting from A. Borgnet, ed., *Alberti Magni Ratisbonensis episcopi, ordinis praedicatorum opera omnia* (Paris, 1890–99), 33:400–401: “Et illud quod autem est contra gratiam, rationem et naturam, maximum est sodomite sicut adulterium.”

⁴⁷Borgnet, ed., 33:400.

⁴⁸Boswell, p. 317.

We would expect Aquinas's views to be known to theologians by the time the Templar trials took place; hence his views on homosexual acts and sodomy are certainly relevant. His opinions are closer to those of the period of the Templar trials, but unfortunately they are no more explicit than most of the other eleventh- to thirteenth-century material. Sex acts *contra naturam* are defined as any type of same-sex activity, male/male, or female/female,⁴⁹ hence must not have referred only to anal intercourse. Homosexual intercourse was, by definition, included in this list. Aquinas does, nevertheless, reserve special critical scorn for what he calls "unnatural vice," saying that it "flouts nature by transgressing its basic principles of sexuality, it is in this matter the gravest of sins."⁵⁰ But within the list of sexual sins, bestiality, which entails having sex with the wrong species, is worse than sodomy, which uses the right species but the wrong sex.⁵¹

Boswell sees various contradictions in Aquinas's treatment of homosexuality and sodomy in which he vacillated between the point of view that any nonprocreative sex act was "unnatural," and the possibility that some "unnatural" acts were in and of themselves not sinful.⁵² In Aquinas's major statements on homosexuality he opines that "vices against nature constitute a species of lust" of which they are the most serious variety, but these unnatural vices include not only homosexuality but "masturbation, intercourse with animals, homosexual intercourse, and non-procreative heterosexual coitus."⁵³ Aquinas's writings appear to indicate that he did regard homosexuality as a "natural" condition, making it difficult, though theologically necessary, to argue as the church did that it was necessarily evil.⁵⁴

Scholars agree that by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, stricter

⁴⁹ Bullough and Brundage, p. 65.

⁵⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 43, "Temperance," ed. Thomas Gilby, 2a2ae.154, 12 (Blackfriars, 1968), p. 247.

⁵¹ Ibid. It is possible to infer that same-sex activities might be considered unnatural only if it was against the person's nature to perform that act.

⁵² Boswell (n. 28 above), pp. 322–30. See also Ranke-Heinemann (n. 41 above), p. 197, in which she notes that Aquinas considered that certain "unnatural" vices were particularly sinful: "masturbation, bestiality, homosexuality, anal and oral intercourse, and coitus interruptus." *Summa Theologiae* 2/2 q.154 a.11: "Tertio, si fiat per concubitum ad non debitum sexum, puta masculi ad masculum, vel foeminae ad foeminam, ut Apostolus dicit ad Rom., quod dicitur sodomiticum vitium." The seriousness of these seemingly unrelated sexual sins all relate to the fact that none of them can result in procreation—the only legitimate reason for sexual union in the first place.

⁵³ Boswell, p. 323.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 327.

measures began to be taken against marginal peoples: Cathars, lepers, Jews, and homosexuals.⁵⁵ Groups that had been tolerated in Christian society no longer were. The establishment of the Office of the Inquisition in 1231 seems to have led to an increased surveillance on human behavior and a concomitant punishment of anyone who did not seem to fall into the mainstream group.

By the end of the thirteenth century, accusations of homosexual practices, sodomy in particular, became common in Inquisition inquiries into important persons, particularly those in the church, for example, Boniface VIII.⁵⁶ It is possible that the common people truly did regard homosexual activity as disgusting and against nature, but there is no proof of this. Guy M  nard suggests that "homosexuality inspired horror" since women were regarded as inferior men. Men taking part in homosexual acts were wasting semen or "future human beings."⁵⁷ This view contradicts behavior that seems to have been tolerated for many centuries before this date.⁵⁸ There is no question that heresy and sodomy came to be linked, as William Monter points out.⁵⁹ Sodomy could in most areas be investigated by both secular and religious tribunals. In Aragon, nevertheless, the Inquisition "claimed jurisdiction over all cases of sodomy whether or not heresy was present."⁶⁰ Monter also believes that "continuous male homosexual subcultures existed in large Italian cities . . . since the High Middle Ages," a view attacked by Randolph Trumbach, who argues that Monter had seriously misinterpreted his mate-

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Robert Ian Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford, 1987); and Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society* (n. 33 above), pp. 472–73.

⁵⁶ See, particularly on accusations of homosexuality directed against the Templars, Vern L. Bullough, "Postscript: Heresy, Witchcraft and Sexuality," in Bullough and Brundage (n. 32 above), pp. 206–17, esp. pp. 213–14. See also Legman (n. 5 above), pp. 7–8 and throughout. On Nogaret and his role in the accusations against Boniface and later against the Templars, with precaution, Thomas S. R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London, 1933), chap. 12; and, more generally, Joseph Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton, NJ, 1980); F. Pegues, *The Lawyers of the Last Capetians* (Princeton, NJ, 1962). On sex as a political tool, see James A. Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy: Rex V. Pons Hugh de Ampurias (1311)," in *Sex in the Middle Ages*, ed. Joyce Salisbury (New York, 1991), pp. 239–46. On the general matter of sexual accusations and their connection to heresy and political actions, see Boswell, pp. 283–87.

⁵⁷ M  nard (n. 28 above), p. 89.

⁵⁸ On sexuality in the ancient world, in addition to the authors cited above in n. 26, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London, 1988).

⁵⁹ William Monter, "Sodomy and Heresy in Early Modern Switzerland," in Licata and Petersen, eds. (n. 1 above), p. 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

rial.⁶¹ Michel Bernos et al. insist that it was the movement into the towns, which occurred before the repressive thirteenth century, that “gave rise to fornication . . . and finally to pederasty.”⁶² We are told that while homosexuality was condemned in the country, city-dwellers condemned bestiality.⁶³ Any solid evidence for such attitudes in the early thirteenth century is woefully inadequate.

In conclusion, theologians in the period from the sixth to the fourteenth century frequently referred to sodomy as either the most serious sexual sin or one of the gravest such sins. There is no doubt, however, that they differed in their definition of the act. It could refer to any illicit sexual coupling between men, women, or a man and a woman. I am convinced that by the fourteenth century, the term “sodomy” was used by theologians and inquisitors almost entirely in reference to male intercourse, anal intercourse in particular. There is certainly no evidence to conclude that a gay subculture existed at this time. The fact that penitential books so frequently refer to homosexual acts must lead us to believe, nevertheless, that these acts were committed fairly frequently.

HOMOSEXUAL ACTS AND THE TEMPLAR CHARGES

Concerning the Templars and other religious orders, accusations of homosexuality were a relative commonplace. Medieval bishops' visitation records mention instances of homosexual acts confessed to by monks or occasionally nuns in various houses.⁶⁴ It would not seem that a few confessions by Templars in this regard would have been seen as particularly serious. However, possibly homosexuality was particularly ill-fitting in regard to a “military” order of fighting men. Richard Rorty states that being sodomized is to be a nonmale, which seems to have been the view of many ancient and medieval writers.⁶⁵ Or, more realistically, were the

⁶¹Ibid., p. 51, n. 6, with reference to Randolph Trumbach, “London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977): 1–33, esp. 9–11. Trumbach argues that the small number of cases, and the unusual social groups usually represented in them, do not confirm the existence of a “relatively continuous [gay] subculture throughout Europe . . . since at least the 12th century” (p. 9).

⁶²Michel Bernos, Charles de la Roncière, Jean Guyon, and Philippe L'écrivain, *Le fruit défendu* (Paris, 1985), pp. 140–41.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴J. Brown (n. 29 above), p. 118.

⁶⁵Richard Rorty, *Ambiguïtés et limites du postmodernisme*, ed. G. Hottois, M. Weyembergh (Paris, 1994), p. 16. On the whole question of ancient and medieval views of males taking the passive role in sexual activity, as well as works cited above, see Michael L. Satlow, “‘They Abused Him Like a Woman’: Homocroticism, Gender Blurring, and the Rabbis in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 (1994): 1–25.

homosexual accusations added to the other charges simply because the authors of the allegations hoped that some of them would fit? We are in the period of the use of sexual accusations, often relating to homosexual practices, as standard features in a list of charges of the Inquisition into matters that were more political than heretical.⁶⁶ Philip IV had raised the specter of the awfulness of the Templars' conduct in his order of arrest of September 14, 1307. His veiled references to sexual crime underlie several of his statements of pious outrage: "We shudder with violent horror, and in thinking of the gravity [of the accusations] an immense sadness grows in us even more cruelly because there is no doubt that the enormity of the crime reaches far enough to be an offense to the divine majesty, a shame to all christianity, a pernicious example of evil, and a universal scandal. . . . It [the Templar order] is comparable to beasts of the field deprived of a sense of reason, even more, going farther in their lack of reason through its astonishing bestiality."⁶⁷ The document continues with a recital of their alleged crimes: denying the divinity of Christ and spitting on the cross. If proved, these would provide proof of heresy existing in the order. The king continues with the more scandalous accusations: naked, they are kissed by the dignitary who receives them at the base of the lower spine, on the navel, and on the mouth, shameful acts in the king's mind except for the usual kiss on the mouth, a common practice in feudal ceremonies. The king relates next that "they are obliged by the vows they take upon profession, and without fearing to offend human law, to give themselves to one another, without refusing, as soon as they are so required, [with] as an effect, a horrific and frightening coupling."⁶⁸ The statement given by Philip IV's lawyer and great propagandist, Pierre Dubois, before the Estates General in Paris in 1308, the supposed "remonstrances of the people of France" included the charge of "bougrerie."⁶⁹ This word can be used as a general term of

⁶⁶On this matter, see Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy" (n. 56 above), pp. 239–46, and his *Law, Sex, and Christian Society* (n. 33 above), pp. 472–73, for a discussion of the increased legislation against homosexual relations from 1250 forward, and the use of charges relating to homosexual acts in politically motivated cases.

⁶⁷Lizerand (n. 3 above), pp. 86–87.

⁶⁸Paris, Archives Nationales, J 413, no. 22, reproduced and translated in Lizerand, p. 18.

⁶⁹Most easily found in Lizerand, who reproduces a transcription of the Latin text, the archival references, and a French translation (pp. 84–101). I have translated all primary source material in this article from the Latin. On these charges see also the *Histoire Littéraire de la France* (Paris, 1873), 26:480–85. Courouve (n. 26 above) points out on p. 9 that the term *bougre*, which designated the Bogomils, took on in the thirteenth century also the meaning of heretic in general, as well as more specifically bestiality and sodomy, and states on p. 10 that the civil laws of Orléans in 1260 used the term *bougre* in a specific context, that of accusations of sodomy.

opprobrium applied to heretics in general, or as a specific reference to buggery.⁷⁰ In any event, Dubois states that the Templars ought to be condemned not for their buggery but for their denials (of Christ), an act that he seems to have found distinctly more despicable.⁷¹ Pierre Dupuy, writing of the condemnation of the Templars in an immensely popular work that was published in 1654, insisted that “the received person kissed the receiver . . . on the base of the spine at that part of the body which is the most foul. And that . . . they were absolutely forbidden to know women carnally, but if they were inflamed by any feelings of desire, they could without fear and without conscience unite with their brothers. . . . Their superiors abused them. . . . One of them confessed that in Cyprus, the Grand Master abused him three times during one night.”⁷²

COURT RECORDS

Testimony given before the courts may furnish some of the most direct evidence available for the ideas and lives of ordinary persons, non-nobles, peasants, and serfs. Since they were normally illiterate at this period, they form a group almost without contemporary written records of their own. Testimony is, nevertheless, necessarily affected by its nature, mediated as it was through the note-taking habits of scribes.⁷³ No medieval notary took the testimony down verbatim. It was often given in one of the vernacular languages, taken down in note form, and then written up in Latin in standard formal notarial language some time later. And it is this later form that is to be found today in the Vatican and other archives. As Dominick LaCapra notes, “An inquisition register is, as [Carlo] Ginzburg observes, part of the ‘archives of the repression.’” But as LaCapra remarks immediately thereafter, “These documents are

⁷⁰ Goodich (n. 28 above) underlined the combination often seen in heresy trials of “devil worshipping by kissing the posterior of the leader followed, or not, by other homosexual acts. Such pseudosexual rites of initiation were also ascribed to the most well-known victims of sexual obscurantism, the order of Knights Templars” (p. 9). His suggestion that “torture always accompanied inquisitorial trials” is not, in fact, correct (see James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* [London, 1995], pp. 95–96), though I would agree that “it is difficult to judge whether the confessions of homosexual activity were true or the inventions of tortured witnesses.” An excellent review of Goodich, and works by Boswell and Peter Coleman, may be found in Michael M. Sheehan, “Christianity and Homosexuality,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982): 438–46.

⁷¹ Dubois, in Lizerand, p. 84.

⁷² Dupuy (n. 3 above), pp. 18–19. This work is very strongly biased against the Templars and in favor of the French monarchy. It was very influential and often used by those writing polemic works against the order in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

⁷³ On scribes, notaries, and inquisition records, see Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law*, pp. 92–96, 135, 137, and 178.

themselves historical realities that do not simply represent but also supplement the realities to which they refer. . . . An inquisition register is a part of discursive context that embodies hegemonic relations.”⁷⁴ Ginzburg himself had stated in the preface of the Italian version of *The Cheese and the Worms* that the mere scarcity of testimony on the behavior of the subaltern classes of the past creates an almost impossible obstacle to our research on them. He believed that in spite of this such testimony could reveal their “beliefs, phantasies, and aspirations.” It was, unfortunately, an oral culture, “but historians cannot begin to speak with peasants of the sixteenth century.” He insists that in spite of the formal nature of the judges’ questions and the answers of the accused we can still recognize that there “flowered a deep layer of popular beliefs.”⁷⁵

The manuscripts of the depositions of the Templar trials (or, more properly, hearings) are models of their sort given that the notaries involved are almost all papal notaries, or at least properly constituted imperial public notaries. The inquisitors are usually bishops or occasionally archbishops. The official written statements of the three or four notaries who attest to and affix their seals to all of these manuscripts of Templar trials appear at key places on the manuscript. In these attestations, each notary affirms that the official document written by one or more of them is a true record of the proceedings. They list the official list of allegations at the start of each trial manuscript, give the date of each witness’s testimony, rarely state whether or not it was given in Latin, and never imply that it was taken down verbatim. The great length of these manuscripts (the trial that I edited in the Papal State and the Abruzzi heard only seven witnesses and was written on 33.75 meters of parchment) indicates the care with which the notaries wrote down even answers that did not suit their presumed agenda: to record the guilty answers.⁷⁶ The written instructions sent out by the French king to bailiffs and provosts with instructions not to open them until October 13, 1307, asked them to “isolate the persons [the Templar prisoners] under good and sure guard, first make an inquiry about them, then call in the commissioners of the inquisitor and examine for the truth with care, by torture if necessary; and if they confess the truth, write down their depositions after having called in witnesses.”⁷⁷

There are several reasons that underline the great importance of this particular inquiry or inquisition into one of the great medieval religious

⁷⁴ Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), p. 62.

⁷⁵ Carlo Ginzburg, *Formaggio e i vermi* (Turin, 1976), pp. xi, xvii; *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

⁷⁶ Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial* (n. 3 above), p. 50.

⁷⁷ Lizerand (n. 3 above), pp. 26–27.

orders. First, the number of men questioned, about 935, is considerable, a sufficient number to give some credence to the answers.⁷⁸ Second, the geographical spread of the inquiry, which has left us with manuscripts from those questioned in England, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, and Cyprus, is extensive. There were undoubtedly other trials for which the evidence no longer remains. There is no other prior set of records in which the same questions were asked of so many persons in so many parts of Latin Christendom. It would also seem that the papal or public notaries who took down the evidence were very careful to do so in the proper format: to record at least the sense of what the witnesses said. Unfortunately, for many trials such as the small, regional French inquiries, we have only very brief summaries of a few lines, which cannot, of course, replicate the prisoners' answers. All the large trials—those in England, Paris, the Pontifical Commission, and Cyprus—and the much smaller ones in Brindisi and the Papal States used a form or subset of the official 127 articles of accusation. This coherence makes it possible to compare directly answers given in various trials with one another.⁷⁹

TEMPLAR TESTIMONY

I would like now to turn to the testimony itself.⁸⁰ Most of the testimony relevant to sexual matters given by Templars during the interrogations is very general in nature, hearsay only, and without mention of who was allegedly committing what illicit act with whom. It is difficult to assess the evidence without considering whether it is "direct evidence" or "hearsay evidence." Although Inquisition records of this sort appear somewhat more reliable than the Renaissance records described by Alan Bray, one would have to agree that, as he said, "they appear to be a sober

⁷⁸The answers obviously construct a truth of their own, unrelated perhaps to what happened within the Templar order. It is not to that "truth" I refer but, rather, to the likelihood that, as alleged, sodomy and/or homosexual acts were frequently carried out in the order and forced on its members.

⁷⁹I am most grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Australian Research Council for their generous subsidies toward the computerization of the answers of all the witnesses; to the Institute of Behavioural Research, York University, Toronto, for their help in the processing of data and devising a suitable program to handle it; and to the Department of History, University of Melbourne, for allowing me to continue this research.

⁸⁰Space will not allow me to go into the inquisitorial procedures, citations, or the swearing in of witnesses, but it is perfectly clear that every proper procedure was taken in the Templar trials for which we have complete records. At least two inquisitors presided. Up to a dozen witnesses observed the proceedings. On judicial summonses and citations, see Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (n. 70 above), pp. 129–30.

and objective record of the incidents.”⁸¹ Yet I cannot agree that in the case of the Templar depositions, as he found with Renaissance records, “it becomes apparent that these documents are in large part no more than convenient legal fictions.”⁸² The precise nature of answers that do not conform to the presumed papal wish to obtain confessions of guilt, for example, those of Peter of Bologna before the Pontifical Commission, indicate that in the early fourteenth century such records contained less “fiction” than they seem to have contained later.⁸³

In the trial held in the Papal States and the Abruzzi in which seven witnesses were questioned during 1309 and 1310, Andrew Armanni of Mount Oderisio, a serving brother in Chieti, stated that “he had often heard it said by brothers of the order with whom he lived that the grand preceptor who received him [Peter Peraverde Ultramontanus] and other preceptors [heads of Templar houses] and important brothers in the order used to have boys with whom they committed carnal [acts].”⁸⁴ In most instances where it is alleged that specific individuals were involved in homosexual acts with members of the order, or others, the witness implicates someone else, not himself. Although in this case, and in others, the person implicated did, in fact, exist. This man was mentioned often in this trial (see the index, page 304) but was conveniently described as having already died.⁸⁵

This particular response may have implied that whatever homosexual acts took place were not with members of the order, since the Templar order did not accept boys,⁸⁶ but with youths who were perhaps employed by the order as servants or agricultural workers. It may, nevertheless, have referred to sex acts committed with young Templars of fifteen or sixteen. It is significant that in this case, and most others, the witness makes the statement that homosexual acts took place without any note of horror, disapproval, or commentary. On the other hand, after describing other acts, notably, the denial of Christ or spitting on the cross, wit-

⁸¹ The medieval records were far, far longer and more detailed than the brief court summaries described by Bray (n. 1 above).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁸³ On the defense effort made by a group of Templars, see Michelet, ed. (n. 3 above), 1:164–69.

⁸⁴ Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, p. 149: “audivit dici communiter a fratribus dicti ordinis cum quibus ipse fuit conversatus quod dictus magnus preceptor qui eum recepit, et alii preceptores et magni fratres in dicto ordine, habebant pueros quibus se carnaliter commiscebant.”

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁸⁶ See Upton-Ward, ed. (n. 11 above), rule 14, which explains that boys should be brought up by their parents and trained in military matters until they are old enough to “bear arms with vigour.”

nesses in various trials expressed regret, or shame, often going off to confess to a priest or higher prelate, in some cases fleeing from the order altogether.⁸⁷

The inquisitors did not dwell on the accusations with sexual significance as they did on the presumed instances of heretical behavior. When interrogating William, a priest interrogated in the same trial, the questioning regarding the denial of Christ or spitting on the crucifix was extremely thorough: "Asked about whether the receivers and those they received had hope [of salvation by Jesus Christ] . . . he said and testified that he used to have and still has hope of receiving salvation through Jesus. He said moreover that the said brothers William and Dominic who forced him to deny Christ, and other brothers of the said order who made others deny Christ, and who denied Christ with their heart, had no hope of receiving salvation through Jesus."⁸⁸ Arriving at the questions on permission to have sex with other brothers, William merely answered that "William and Dominic told him that brothers . . . could legitimately have sex with one another. . . . He said and testified that he never did it, nor did he suffer it, that which was contained in the allegation; he did not know about what other brothers did."⁸⁹

Gerard of Piacenza added the first specific information on the subject given in this trial. As well as stating that he had been told that homosexual acts were not a sin, he insisted that he was told by brother Albert of Castro Alquatro that "brother James of Bologna, vicar of brother James of Monte Cuccho," the grand preceptor sought but never found in this trial, "had carnal relations with brother Manfred of Balneoregio."⁹⁰ The witness did not express any horror or disgust over the actions of James of Bologna. As mentioned above, expressions of indignation are a feature of many witnesses' testimony in connection with other acts, denying the possibility of salvation through Christ, for example; it is significant that this witness did not demonstrate such an attitude when he gave this testimony.⁹¹

The last witness in this trial, Walter of Naples, added a new bit of information: "brother Albert after making him deny Christ and spit on the cross, although he spat beside it, told him that he might kiss him on

⁸⁷ See the Paris testimony and that of the Pontifical Commission in Michelet, ed., vols. 1 and 2.

⁸⁸ Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial* (n. 3 above), p. 174.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁹¹ Schottmüller, ed. (n. 3 above), 2:275, in Cyprus, witness XX, a knight, when asked about spitting on the cross, or exhibiting a lack of reverence to Christ, replied "that he did not believe that any other religion in the world honoured and revered the cross more than did the order and brothers of the military order of the Temple."

the nude stomach," prior to granting him permission to commit homosexual acts.⁹² Nevertheless, Walter never suffered or committed these acts himself and knew nothing about the whole matter. The ritual admission that witnesses were told that they might have sex with other members of the order, but did not do so, is by far the most frequent response to questions on this matter. The intriguing question here, unanswerable from direct evidence, is, first, Was such permission to have sex with other brothers routinely given at reception ceremonies, or was it invented by witnesses to satisfy the inquisitors? Since the witness almost always insisted that he himself had never participated in same-sex acts, such an admission would place guilt on others, not on the witness himself. I must stress that no such testimony was given in areas in which torture was not used, such as England or Cyprus.

References to the area of homosexuality were more explicit in the Tuscan trial of 1310–11 in which four of the six witnesses confessed in some way to these charges. The first prisoner insisted that generally the four allegations were correct. Brothers were instructed that male sexual relations were not sinful.⁹³ Had such an instruction ever been given to new members, the suggestion that it was not a sin would, of course, have removed the important question of deliberate commission of sin from anyone who followed these instructions. But is it credible that Templars could have, or would have, believed such an absurd directive? Regarding specific testimony on this subject, he alleged that it was well known in the order that such behavior took place. In fact, he had seen two men so doing.⁹⁴ This evidence was confirmed in substance by the following witness, who insisted that it was public knowledge in the order that such behavior was not a sin.⁹⁵

The third witness in the Florence-Lucca trial confirmed the evidence of his two predecessors and added the names of five Templars, several of them preceptors, who were *maxime subdomite*, very great sodomites.⁹⁶ He denied such acts himself. Only one more witness, the sixth, adduced any direct evidence in this matter; he had no proof but offered the information that he had seen and heard that brother James of Bologna and brother Manfred his servant behaved in this manner.⁹⁷ Once again, no surprise is expressed at such acts occurring.

⁹² Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, p. 255.

⁹³ Bini (n. 3 above), pp. 464–65.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 465.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 473.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 481, in reference to "frater Arrigus de Pinzano, frater Guillelmus de Nove, frater Martinus preceptor de Pisis, frater Gandulfus preceptor de Florentia, frater Villanus preceptor de Monte Lopio."

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 497.

The trial in Brindisi in 1310 heard only two witnesses, one of whom confessed to knowledge of homosexual behavior.⁹⁸ He spoke of sodomy in particular rather than in the general terms used elsewhere. The word “sodomy” itself in its Latin variants does occur occasionally, but much more often we find the much more vague expression “to unite with one another.” He stated that he had heard that brother Hippolyte ordered brother Dennis of Barolo to allow him to commit sodomy.⁹⁹ Brother Dennis, Hippolyte’s servant, also committed sodomy with Hippolyte and was imprisoned for committing this crime.¹⁰⁰ The Templar Rule explains in no uncertain terms that the penalty for sodomy was expulsion from the order, or in some cases perpetual imprisonment. Sodomy was considered to be one of the most serious crimes any Templar could commit. There were nine sins for which Templars could be “expelled from the house for ever.” “The fourth is if a brother is tainted with the filthy, stinking sin of sodomy, which is so filthy and so stinking and so repugnant that it should not be named.”¹⁰¹ Yet, in one of the examples found in the later information on penances composed between 1257 and 1267, it seems evident that same-sex practices seem to have occurred that did not of necessity include anal sex: “At Château Pèlerin¹⁰² there were brothers who practiced wicked sin and caressed each other in their chambers at night; so that those who knew of the deed and others who had suffered greatly by it, told this thing to the Master.”¹⁰³

One of the most important early hearings took place in Poitiers in 1308 and heard seventy-two witnesses.¹⁰⁴ It was held particularly in order to convince Pope Clement V of the accuracy of Philip IV’s allegations. Since the pope appears to have been convinced of the guilt of the order by this testimony, in spite of the relative lack of importance of the witnesses, its testimony needs close consideration. There is no doubt whatever that torture had been used. The deposition of a knight contained the following statement: “Asked whether he had confessed while being tortured, or even afterwards, he said no. But he said that after the aforesaid tortures, he was placed for three weeks or so in a turret on

⁹⁸ Schottmüller, 2:128.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Upton-Ward, ed. (n. 11 above), p. 112.

¹⁰² Castle Pilgrim, or Athlit, on the coast near Tiberias, was built in only six months in 1218. It was one of the largest Templar castles, surrounded by a town and massive walls. See Hugh Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 124–28.

¹⁰³ Upton-Ward, ed., pp. 13 (on dating the text) and 148 (for details of the offense).

¹⁰⁴ For this testimony see Schottmüller, ed. (n. 3 above), 2:9–71; and Finke (n. 3 above), 2:329–40. Thirty of the original depositions are missing. See also Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial* (n. 3 above), p. 19.

bread and water, and afterwards he was brought to Poitiers . . . and there he confessed as above spontaneously, of his own will without any coercion.”¹⁰⁵ Twenty-two of these men gave specific evidence relating to homosexual acts. A serving brother from Limoges, Peter of Claustro, the second witness, began by stating that “according to a statute of the Templar order one could commit sexual acts with the brothers without sin; he however never did so.”¹⁰⁶

Brother Clement of Pomar insisted not only that he received permission to have carnal relations with other brothers, but that he in fact did so whenever he wished.¹⁰⁷ He expressed no remorse over this act, and since the inquisitors’ comments are never included with the transcript, we cannot know what the inquisitors’ reactions to his confession were.

The sixth witness, John of Cranaco, in describing his reception into the order, said that when the presiding officer, the receptor, told him that he should have sexual relations with other brothers if he was inflamed with lust, he had removed the habit of the order, in disgust one assumes.¹⁰⁸ The Templar officer ordered him to resume the habit, saying that this was one of the “points of the order.”¹⁰⁹ Templars, like most others in religious life, were not permitted to leave the order without permission of the grand master, as he came to be called, or the pope.¹¹⁰ In fact, even taking the habit off for any reason, and throwing it down, was a serious fault. Robert of Gay continued with an affirmation of homosexual activity as licit by saying that he was told that “if any brother of the order wished to lie with him, he should permit him” to do so; “he also could lie with them” since that was one of the directives of the order.¹¹¹

Raymond of Narbonne spoke if anything more clearly on the subject of homosexual activity. He insisted that he had been told that “it was a greater sin to lie with women [than with men].”¹¹² Nevertheless, he in-

¹⁰⁵ Schottmüller, ed., 2:65.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 17. For specific or hearsay guilt in relation to homosexual relations, or sodomy, see witnesses 2–4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15–19, 21, 22, 28, 31–33 (in the trial as reproduced in Schottmüller, vol. 2), and witnesses 40–42 and 45 (from the remaining depositions in Finke, vol. 2).

¹⁰⁷ Schottmüller, ed., 2:20: “dictus magister in presentia dictorum fratrum injunxit ei, quod ipse non recusaret aliquem de fratribus ipsius ordinis si vellet cum eo carnaliter commisceri, et quod ipse finaliter commisceatur cum fratribus quando vellet.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 23: “si calor naturalis superveniret eum, quod accederet ad aliquem de fratribus sui ordinis et haberet facere cum eo.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., statute 263 in Upton-Ward, ed., p. 78, and accusation 34 of the full list in Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial*, p. 77.

¹¹¹ Schottmüller, ed., 2:24.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 29.

sisted that he had not sought out men in this way nor had others beseeched him. It seems illogical that if, in reality, this directive was a normal feature of reception ceremonies, so few men were ever approached by others who wanted to have sex with them.

John of Cugy or Cuisi, when asked about homosexual activity, confirmed Raymond's testimony. When asked about the vice of sodomy,¹¹³ he replied that he had been told he might have sex with his brothers but he never did so.¹¹⁴ Another witness to testify on this matter in Poitiers said exactly the same thing.¹¹⁵ Several other witnesses testified in a like manner without adding to our knowledge of the alleged illicit acts.¹¹⁶ The eighth witness described illicit kisses and the fact that he was told Templars must observe chastity as far as women were concerned. When asked whether he had been told he had permission to have sex with the brethren, he rather surprisingly responded that he could not remember.¹¹⁷ This response would seem to indicate that it was not a matter of any importance, hence not uncommon. The eighteenth witness, when asked about sodomy, said that he had been told to abstain from women but to have sex with the brothers if he felt the need to do so.¹¹⁸ Witness Deodatus Jefet, after having given evidence similar to those who testified earlier, added that a Templar knight, William Dersis, had asked him to have sex with him but that he had refused. He did not state that anything happened to him because he refused. No further details were given.¹¹⁹ If one believes that brothers were ordered to have sex on demand if others asked them to do so, it would not be possible to refuse with impunity, since it would be a fault against the mandatory vow of obedience.

The next witness, another of the few knights to testify in Poitiers, added nothing to the usual recital of permission to commit carnal acts but the denial that such acts ever took place.¹²⁰ The last witness of this group offered a similar deposition.¹²¹ In fact, no serious allegations that would confirm the reality that homosexual acts took place in the order occurred in this trial.

The depositions of witnesses at Poitiers appearing in Finke's work are more discursive and fuller than those published by Schottmüller. John

¹¹³ *Vitio sodomitico* is used here.

¹¹⁴ Schottmüller, ed. (n. 3 above), 2:41.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Poitiers: witnesses 2–4, 6, 7, 11, 19, 22.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46. See also witness 21.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

of Villiers stated that his receiver and other brothers kissed him “on the mouth, on the navel, and at the base of the dorsal spine.”¹²² James of Castillon went further, insisting that some of the brothers asked him to have sex with them, but he did not wish to.¹²³ Hugo of Guamaches only kissed the brethren on the mouth but stated that he was told not to consort with women, “but with the brothers if he became aroused.”¹²⁴ Several of these men were specifically asked about “the vice of sodomy” but knew nothing about it.¹²⁵ A serving brother named Stephen testified at considerable length, saying that brother Paul wished to “corrupt and pollute him with that abhorrent sin, . . . sodomy . . . but he abhorred that sin to such a degree that he hit Paul in the chin breaking three of his teeth and fracturing his jaw.”¹²⁶ Stephen was taken to task by one of the officials for refusing Paul’s request. Although this evidence from Poitiers may seem damning, all scholars today see this particular hearing as notoriously unreliable. The witnesses appearing seem to have been handpicked, perhaps trained in their answers, in order to convince the pope of the Templars’ guilt.¹²⁷

By far the most important early trial of the series of interrogations between 1307 and 1311 was that held in Paris in 1307 and took testimony from 138 witnesses.¹²⁸ It was twice as large as the Poitiers hearing, and much more important, with evidence heard from a wider variety of Templar witnesses, including knights and priests. All but thirty-one of these men stated that homosexual activity was either permitted or licit, only two that it actually took place.

The first witness in this hearing, Ranier of Larchent, had been received by John of Tours, treasurer of the order some twenty-six years earlier. Ranier offered uncommon evidence on the subject. He related that the psalm “Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum” was a coded message implying that the brothers might have sex with one another. He gave no testimony whatever on the reality or

¹²² Finke (n. 3 above), 2:329.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 330.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 331.

¹²⁵ See, among others, *ibid.*, p. 333.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 336.

¹²⁷ Barber, *Trial of the Templars* (n. 2 above), pp. 98–103, which asserts that at least 60 percent of those whose depositions from Poitiers remain were either apostates or those who stated they had either been tortured or threatened with torture. See also Gilmour-Bryson, ed., *Trial* (n. 3 above), pp. 18–19.

¹²⁸ Michelet, ed. (n. 3 above), lists them as 140 witnesses (2:275), but the exact number is difficult to ascertain since several persons reappear who testified earlier, and it is often impossible to be sure whether or not two witnesses of the same name are the same individual.

existence of homosexual acts in the order.¹²⁹ It stretches credibility to the utmost to see in one of the psalms an incitement to homosexual acts.

This sort of testimony, which was heard from the group in Paris in 1307, has little substance. It consists of an endless recitation of incitement to commit homosexual activities without any definite evidence of when or where, or indeed whether, such acts were committed. I intend to concentrate here only on those persons who offered different and specific testimony and omit those who merely stated that such behavior was tolerated without the addition of any definite, firsthand information.¹³⁰

A second witness offered direct evidence on this matter. One John of Tortavilla insisted that after receiving the standard advice on homosexuality from a dignitary of the order, Gerard of Villiers, "visitor" (a high official) of France, he had had carnal relations twice with a certain William whose whereabouts were presently unknown to him.¹³¹ He added that he understood from what he had been told that having sex with a member of the order was not a sin, but that had he had sex with a non-Templar it would have been sinful. After all, if some men believed precisely what they were allegedly told, that is exactly what they would have thought. Yet, given the general reputation of the Templar order and its members, it is not credible that all new members were told that homosexual activity was licit.

Another bit of evidence was elicited from brother Peter of Safet, a serving brother, originally from Acre, who insisted that while he was told homosexual activity was licit, he had not participated in such behavior. However, during the night, a Spanish brother was seen coming out of

¹²⁹ See Psalms 133 in the Hebrew Bible, 132 in the Vulgate, which reads: "How good, how delightful it is for all to live together like brothers" (trans. from the Jerusalem Bible). According to the *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria* (1480/1), ed. Karlfried Froelich et al. (Turnhout, 1992), col. 631, this psalm is associated with monasteries; thus it was a common one to use at monastic reception ceremonies. The evidence is cited from Michelet, ed., 2:279. Before the Pontifical Commission this witness stated that he had been received 34 years earlier (Michelet, ed., 1:494).

¹³⁰ This witness sets the scene for the trial by saying that while he was told he might commit homosexual activities, he did not: "post hec idem recipiens dixit eidem quod poterat se commiscere carnaliter cum aliis fratribus, et alii cum eo, si vellent. Dixit tamen per iuramentum suum quod nunquam fecit." Michelet, ed., 2:283, 284–85, 287–88, 293, 295, 297 (two witnesses), 299, 302–3, 304, 308, 310–11 (two witnesses), 312–13 (three witnesses), 314–15, 317, 319, 320 (two witnesses), 321 (two witnesses), 322 (two witnesses), 323–24 (two witnesses), 325, 327–31 (who echoed the usual statement that he never committed such acts nor was he ever asked to), 332, 334 (two witnesses), 336–38, 340–43 (two witnesses), 344–47. The witness on p. 292 differed in that he insisted that he had confessed to a papal penitentiary. Similar testimony is given by witnesses in *ibid.*, pp. 350, 353–54, 359–60, 362–64, 372, 373, 375–76, 380–81, 383, 385, 388, 389–92, 394, 396–97, 402, 404, 412, 415, 417–18.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

the room of the Master of the Templars, and he sexually abused the witness, who did not dare to deny him because of the master's instructions to him. Peter had been received in Nicosia by James of Molay himself about five years earlier.¹³² This testimony would appear to confirm that, in one case at least, sex was forced on low-ranking members of the order by others. In spite of the element of force, Peter did not express any feelings of shame.

When the principal defender of the Templars before the papal commissioners, the priest Peter of Bologna, appeared at the Paris trial, his testimony was completely different from his later appearance, at which time he insisted with great eloquence that the order was completely innocent. In this first appearance, echoing the others, he stated that "the presiding officer told him that he could *se commiscere* [unite] with the brothers and they with him without sin. He however did not believe it, and does not believe it, as he said, because it is a horrible sin, and he said that he never committed that sin."¹³³ This man was an educated man of the law, eloquent, and used to pleading before the papal curia. His opinion may be one widely held by many important members of the order, but not one necessarily shared by the much more numerous serving brothers or sergeants.

A slight variant on the usual testimony was offered by Fulk of Trecis, who when asked about carnal relations said, "cohabitation with women was prohibited to him, but he was told that the brothers' beds were [common between them] *communes inter ipsos*."¹³⁴ The Templar rule of the order clearly stated that each member was to sleep clothed in his own bed.¹³⁵ Poverty and occasional overcrowding might certainly have made it necessary overseas for the Templars to share beds, a perfectly common medieval practice unrelated to sexual behavior. In fact, this directive to share beds with visitors or other Templars when necessary may have influenced serving brothers in particular to think that sexual acts with the brethren were licit.

Hence, although the Paris trial heard ninety-four Templars state that they had been told homosexual relations were licit, even obligatory in many cases, only two persons gave any direct evidence of its existence.

¹³² Ibid., p. 294.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 349.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 384. This statement is repeated by John of Bersees, Galfrid of Fera, John of Poissons, a shepherd, Milo of St. Fiacre, a priest who added the explanation after mentioning the communal or common beds that they could commit carnal acts with one another, and brother Boinus (who was unsure whether the mention of common beds had any evil intent; *ibid.*, pp. 388–89, 394, 397, 403).

¹³⁵ *Rule of the Templars*, rule 21, and see other entries in the index under "sleeping arrangements."

The others merely confirmed that they had been told they might or should commit carnal acts with other Templars but were never asked to do so and did not take the initiative themselves.

The hearings of the Pontifical Commission held between 1309 and 1311 heard from 229 men,¹³⁶ many of whom had already testified in the earlier Paris trial. This hearing is often accorded the highest status because of its relatively impartial nature. The influence of Philip IV and his councillors was much less than it had been at earlier hearings. The sessions were held before Gilles Aicelin, archbishop of Narbonne, a great expert in the law, and royal councillor. Three other bishops, those of Bayeux, Mende, and Limoges, assisted Aicelin. Although Favier classifies these men as not being royal stooges, none of them is known to have been opposed to the king.¹³⁷ They might be described as belonging to the royal camp.

The first two witnesses made no reference to homosexual acts.¹³⁸ The third, a serving brother who had only been a Templar for about three years prior to his capture (presumably in 1307) stated that he had never heard anything about the matter until after he was arrested.¹³⁹ The next witness, received in Poitiers but at the time of the hearing of the London diocese, insisted that he had never heard that homosexual relations were licit; in fact he considered that "it was a grave sin to do it or to suffer it."¹⁴⁰ He offered hearsay evidence referring to stories that overseas Templars committed that sin ten years earlier, but he did not believe that they did so with any kind of official permission or statute.¹⁴¹ The knowledge that homosexual acts were considered a sin by the church should have been common to all men entering a religious order. In fact, a witness in the hearing on Cyprus said on the subject that "what was alleged in the article was not true. On the other hand, it is a great sin, and so the broth-

¹³⁶ Michelet arrives at a total of 231 witnesses, but it is extremely difficult to count these men accurately as stated above since some of them reappear and should consequently not be counted twice; see Michelet, ed., 1:xiii. Procedural matters take up the commission's time between November 1309 and April 13, 1310, when the actual hearing of testimony begins; *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹³⁷ Jean Favier, preface to Michelet, ed., 1:ix.

¹³⁸ Michelet, ed. (n. 3 above), 1:178–87.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190: "respondit se nichil scire nec audivisse ante capcionem suam."

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196. Other testimony by witnesses who considered homosexuality to be nonexistent or who said nothing about the subject are to be found in *ibid.*; see, e.g., pp. 209, 212–17 (he alleged many impious acts but nothing of a sexual nature), 218, 225–26 (this witness, and others, first heard of the allegations relating to homosexuality when interrogated by the local bishop), 257 (this witness and many others stated that they did not believe the allegation to be true), 267, 272, 299, 304, 309, 314, 318, 322, 330, 336, 340, 345, 349, 351 (his testimony is somewhat ambiguous), 357, 363, 366.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

ers, and he himself, said and observed. And he said that any place or land where such a sin [having homosexual relations] was committed ought to be inundated by a flood ["submerged" in the Latin text]."¹⁴² Another Cypriot Templar, preceptor of one of the houses, said that "the accusation was not true. On the contrary, anyone found guilty of the said vice had his habit removed from him and he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment."¹⁴³

In contrast, a sixty-year-old knight, member of the order for twenty-four years, mentioned in several persons' testimonies as a "preceptor" or receiver of new members,¹⁴⁴ stated that he had been told to have sex with brothers of the order rather than with women. He was not told, nevertheless, that homosexual relations were not a sin against chastity.¹⁴⁵ Later in his testimony he stated that he knew of no members actually committing this offense.¹⁴⁶ That the commission of same-sex acts was deemed to be related to age appears in his testimony, in which he said that he had not told an old man received into the order that uniting with his brethren was licit because of his age, while he had so informed a young man at his reception.¹⁴⁷

A certain serving brother, Theobald of Taverniaco of the diocese of Paris, gave an unusual answer to the queries relating to homosexual acts. When asked regarding allegations 41–45, he replied "that he did not believe the contents of those articles to be true because they could have beautiful and wealthy women, and frequently they did so, because they were rich and powerful, and because of this he and other brothers of the order were frequently banished from their [Templar] houses."¹⁴⁸ While denying the existence of homosexual practices, one of the witnesses explained why earlier men had referred to Templars sleeping two to a bed by saying that it was "for lack of beds that sometimes they slept two together,"¹⁴⁹ while specifying that no untoward activities took place

¹⁴²Schottmüller, ed. (n. 3 above), 2:275.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 326.

¹⁴⁴Michelet, ed., 2:180, 302.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 1:234–35.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 238. Other witnesses stated that homosexuality was described to them as preferable to having sex with women, with or without it being described as licit, and without any specific data on the subject. See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 251, 294 (this witness referred to "sodomia" but said he knew nothing about the matter except that the presiding officer said that he might do it), 373, 375, 378, and throughout.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 326.

¹⁴⁹"Propter inopiam lectorum quandoque jacebant bini" (It was from lack of beds that they slept two to a bed); *ibid.*, p. 333. Another witness put it this way: "fuit dictum per receptorem quod quando probi homines ordinis venirent et carerent lectis, quod reciperet eos bene et curialiter in lecto suo" (It was told them by the receiver that when good men

since they slept clothed and girdled. Hildegard of Bingen, in her explanation of the Benedictine Rule, rubric 28, on underclothing, added that while in the period before the late eleventh century, particularly the time of Benedict himself, the wearing of underclothing was unusual: "now in our times, because the customs of men indicate it, it is not displeasing to God if monks, because of the blasphemy of sacrilege which they might experience in naked flesh, wear underclothes so that they will not be naked and touch flesh with flesh, and thus be reminded of fleshly sins."¹⁵⁰ Hildegard also explained that at the time of Benedict monks wore a cincture over the tunic since they did not wear underclothes.¹⁵¹

One witness, a priest, gave evidence relating to that above concerning the sleeping arrangements,¹⁵² which tends to explain why some postulants, when hearing this advice at their reception ceremonies, might have confused the injunction to share their beds when needed because of overcrowding with an official incitement to perform or permit homosexual acts.

One of the longest, most complete, and most bewildering depositions of this hearing was given by the knight Gerald of Caux, of the diocese of Rodez.¹⁵³ He had already received absolution and been reconciled by the lord bishop of Paris.¹⁵⁴ Twelve or thirteen years earlier he had been received as a Templar at Cahors. His reception ceremony had been extremely rigorous. He had been required to answer a series of questions about his belief in "the Catholic faith according to the Roman Church."¹⁵⁵ The vows he was required to take were completely in keeping with the rule and the spirit of the order according to the declaration of Peter of Bologna mentioned above: "Understand well what we say to you; you have sworn and promised by God and the blessed [virgin] Mary that you will always be obedient to the Master of the Temple and any of the brothers of the order . . . that you will observe chastity, the good uses and practices of the order, and live without [personal] possessions unless they have been given to you by your superior."¹⁵⁶ Once he had received the Templar robe, the priest recited the psalm referred to by

of the order came and they were short of beds that he receive them well and properly in his bed); *ibid.*, p. 354.

¹⁵⁰ Hildegard of Bingen, "Explanation of the Rule of Benedict," ed. and trans. Hugh Feiss, OSB (Toronto, 1990), p. 38. This reference has, of course, nothing to do with homosexual coupling but is concerned simply with avoiding sexual arousal.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁵² Michelet, ed. (n. 3 above), 1:345–46.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 379–94.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

another Templar earlier, *Ecce quam bonum*, as an incitement to homosexuality.¹⁵⁷ Only, in this instance, it was a normal part of a monastic induction ceremony and not related to sin. As part of a lengthy recital of misdeeds that would cause a member to be cast out of the order, the presiding officer mentioned the following serious offenses: "If they joined with one another, or knew a woman, or were in a suspicious place with her."¹⁵⁸ But after the totally licit ceremony, the presiding official allegedly left the premises leaving the new members with four or five serving brothers. It was almost always in separate ceremonies, after a licit initial ritual, that untoward acts allegedly occurred.

In the recently published edition of the trial of the Templars in the Auvergne, particularly explicit evidence on homosexual acts was given. William of Born, a knight of the diocese of Limoges, related that when he was asked to have carnal relations with other brothers, according to the statute of the order, he had sex with four of them. While the other man lay on the ground holding himself with his feet and his hands, William climbed upon him and introduced his penis into the anus of the prostrate individual. He testified that these acts took place on more than fifty occasions and he had confessed these deeds.¹⁵⁹ Under normal circumstances, the Templar chaplain would have imposed extremely severe penances for such confessions. Had this behavior come to the master's attention, as mentioned above, he would have been expelled from the order. No other Templar of the almost one thousand who testified stated that he had committed homosexual acts so frequently.

Only one other witness at this trial confessed to having had homosexual relations, Robert Courteix, a sergeant from Clermont-Ferrand, who stated that he had sex with three brothers during his forty years in the order.¹⁶⁰ The other twenty-nine Templars denied having committed any such acts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it seems quite clear that both the inquisitors and the Templars they questioned understood the meaning of the accusations made to them. Whatever confusion may have existed earlier on the nature of sodomy, the accusations against the Templars specified in detail what the

¹⁵⁷ See n. 130 above.

¹⁵⁸ "Si commiserentur carnaliter, cognovisse mulierem, vel fuisse in loco suspecto cum ea"; Michelet, ed., 1:383.

¹⁵⁹ Sève and Chagny-Sève (n. 3 above), p. 148.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 215.

alleged illicit acts were: the giving and/or exchanging of kisses not just on the mouth, as usual, but on the navel or bare stomach, the buttocks, the base of the spine (probably meaning the anus), or the penis. Furthermore, brothers were allegedly told at their reception that they could and should have sex with one another, that having carnal relations with other brothers was not sinful, and that many of them, in fact, did so. It is not really credible that any witness misunderstood these questions. Admittedly, the word “sodomy” was not referred to in the official accusations. Perhaps the inquisitors, or the lawyers of Philip IV who framed these accusations, thought the term might not have been understood by all the brethren, many of whom were unlettered. The act of sodomy was referred to in various testimonies, and in the case in the Auvergne, the description is certainly the same as a dictionary definition of the act.

We must surely agree that although a large number of Templars alleged having been told they might commit homosexual acts, and that it was licit to do so, very few of them offered any substantive testimony in that regard. It is impossible to discern whether the alleged permission to engage in homosexual relations was actually given at reception to all, or most, of the brethren. In trials where almost all Templars confessed their guilt (France and most of Italy), those few who described licit or normal receptions do not mention any such permission being given. Those from areas such as Cyprus or England where large trials produced little or no evidence of guilt strongly deny that any permission to have sex with other brethren was ever received. Some hearsay evidence regarding homosexual acts committed by other persons came forth, most of it completely unsubstantiated. A very, very few witnesses, fewer than might have been expected, described having had homosexual relations, even fewer the act of sodomy itself. But was this information merely left out by most witnesses because of shame or fear of punishment? I am very doubtful that witnesses omitted such details for those reasons. These men almost uniformly admitted spitting on the cross, reviling Jesus Christ, and denying that his death redeemed mankind from sin. Surely the mention of homosexual sex acts of some sort after having received permission to engage in them would have seemed infinitely less grave. In the cases where such acts were mentioned, usually as having been engaged in by others, it was unusual for the witness to exhibit any particular disgust, shame, or horror. Those who testified in trials where confessions of guilt did not occur occasionally gave the expected comment that they knew sex acts between men, or sodomy in particular, to constitute an abhorrent sin.

While we can never know the truth about the sexual behavior of the Templars, one must acknowledge that in the order homosexual relations

were always regarded as a serious sin to be severely punished.¹⁶¹ Its frequency was probably on a par with that of any other religious order, possibly even less. Scholars who assert confidently that the Templar order was pervaded by practicing homosexuals have no real evidence on which to base such claims.¹⁶²

After having spent more than twenty years studying this material, I remain convinced that some homosexual acts were practiced in the Templar order, as they were in all other institutes of religion, that the frequency of such behavior was not particularly high, and that most Templars did not regard the practice of homosexual acts with any great horror or loathing, although a few did. The accusation leveled against the order of widespread homosexual behavior does not rest on any firm foundation. My belief has been reinforced, through this study of thousands of pages of trial testimony, that considerable personal and social information is hidden between routine, totally incredible answers, forced by threats or by torture.

¹⁶¹ See Upton-Ward, ed. (n. 11 above), statute 418, p. 112.

¹⁶² Strayer (n. 56 above), p. 291; and for a recent summary of this topic, Barber, *New Knighthood* (n. 9 above), pp. 227–28, 306–7.